

Development, local politics and the "new Europe" in County Donegal : an ethnographic study

Paul S Collinson (1999)

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**Development, Local Politics and the
“New Europe” in County Donegal.
An Ethnographic Study.**

Paul Scott Collinson

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy at Oxford Brookes University.
May 1999.

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Abstract.

This study is based upon ethnographic research conducted in County Donegal, the most northerly county in the Republic of Ireland, between January 1997 and January 1998. It is focused upon three "development communities" in the county: development professionals, voluntary activists working for area-based community groups, and elected members of Donegal County Council. The primary aim of the study is to examine the social basis for the fragmentary nature of development activity in Donegal, in view of the new European Union-sponsored local development initiatives which have been implemented in Ireland during the past decade. It is argued that the way in which each of the three groups experience, talk about, understand and reify development-elements which together provide the framework for their respective development discourses- can be interpreted most profitably in light of social factors. An extended case-study approach is used throughout, in order to provide a detailed exploration of the contrasting social environments in which the development process occurs in the county.

In chapter one, a theoretical framework is established which takes as its cue the ideas of a number of development anthropologists working in non-European contexts, and, in drawing from this literature, the concept of "discourses of development" is introduced as an overall paradigm in which the empirical data are interpreted. Chapter two introduces Donegal as a place, concentrating on some of the historical events which have given rise to contemporary patterns of social organisation. Chapter three outlines the history of EU-sponsored development activity in Ireland, highlighting the distinctive nature of the EU's "bottom-up" model and providing the background for the principal empirical chapters which follow. In chapters four to seven, the contrasting social environments within which each "development community" operates are examined in detail. Particular attention is paid to the role of discourse in providing criteria for inclusion/exclusion, and in disrupting the processes of communication within the development sector of the county as a whole.

The study also has a number of secondary aims. Most notably, it seeks to extend the theoretical scope of Irish anthropology and the anthropology of the European Union by exploring the changing relationship between the locale and wider structures and influences in terms of the application of the EU's model of development in Donegal. Additionally, the final chapter includes a tentative assessment of the relevance of the data for policy prescription, in light of the recent government initiative to reform the local government system and the future of local development in Ireland.

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The study is dedicated to the memory of my grandparents, Ciss, Fred, George and Moff.

Glossary of Abbreviations and Terms.

ADM	Area Development Management Ltd.
AEIDL	Transnational network of LEADER groups
An Foras Talúntais	Agricultural development agency, a precursor of Teagasc (q.v.)
An Taisca	A national environmental/heritage organisation, which has local branches throughout Ireland.
Barony	Primary sub-county administrative unit in Ireland prior to formation of Grand Jury system in the nineteenth century
Bord Fáilte	Irish Tourist Board
Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM)	Irish Fisheries Training Agency
CAP	EU Common Agricultural Policy
CDB	Congested District Board
CEA	County Electoral Area
CEB	County Enterprise Board
CEC	Commission of the European Communities
CEG	Community and Enterprise Group (county council committee)
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CI	EU Community Initiative
Clachan	A dispersed cluster of households, the dominant settlement pattern in pre-famine Ireland
Coillte	Irish Forestries Board
Cooring	The exchange of agricultural labour common in western Ireland in the nineteenth century, and documented by, among others, Arensberg and Kimball (1968[1940]), Brody (1973) and Hannan (1972). Strictly speaking, cooring refers to the communal labour of a clachan (q.v.) settlement
CPA	Combat Poverty Agency

CSF	Community Support Framework
CSG	County Strategy Group
Cumann	Local branches of the Fianna Fáil (q.v.) party
CWC	Community Workers' Co-operative
Dáil Éireann	Chamber of Deputies, the house of the Oireachtas (q.v.) elected by universal suffrage. Usually shortened to Dáil
DCC	Donegal County Council
DCWC	Donegal Community Workers' Co-operative
DDA	Drumkeen Development Association
DED	District Electoral Division
DG	Directorate General of the European Commission
DLDC	Donegal Local Development Company
DoA	Department of Agriculture
DoE	Department of the Environment
DoEaLG	Department of the Environment and Local Government
DTFPR/T.F.	Donegal Task Force for Peace and Reconciliation
EAGGF	European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund
ECU	European Currency Unit
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESB	Electricity Supply Board
ESF	European Social Fund
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute

FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair (National Training and Employment Authority)
FEOGA	French for EAGGF (q.v.)
Fianna Fáil	Irish political party. Trans.: “Soldiers of Destiny”
Fine Gael	Irish political party. Trans.: “Tribe of the Gaels”
Forbairt	Development agency responsible for indigenous industry in non Irish-speaking areas. (Now renamed as “Enterprise Ireland”)
Forfás	Umbrella organisation comprising of Forbairt and IDA Ireland
Foroige	National youth organisation.
GAA	Gaelic Athletics Association
Gaeltacht	Irish-speaking area
Gaeltara Éireann	Development authority responsible for Irish-speaking areas, a precursor of úderás na Gaeltachta (q.v.)
Galltacht	Non Irish-speaking area
Garda Síochána	Irish police force, usually shortened to Garda (plur.: Gardai). Trans.: “Civic Guards”
GCS	Glencolumbkille Co-operative Society
GDS	Glencolumbkille Development Society
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
IAOS	Irish Agricultural Organisation Society
IBEC	Irish Business and Employers Confederation
ICA	Irish Countrywomen’s Association
ICTU	Irish Congress of Trade Unions

IDA/IDA (Ireland)	Industrial Development Authority, responsible for the attraction of foreign investment in non Irish-speaking areas.
IFA	Irish Farmers' Association
IFI	International Fund for Ireland
INTERREG	European Union Community Initiative
IPC	Inishowen Partnership Company
IRD	Integrated Rural Development
IRDL	Inishowen Rural Development Ltd.
LEADER	European Union Community Initiative
LDP	Local Development Programme, a sub-programme in the Operational Programme for Local, Urban and Rural Development 1994-1999. Full title: "The Integrated Development of Designated Disadvantage and Other Areas"
MCC	Member of County Council
Meithal	A traditional system of mutual aid in rural areas of Ireland, whereby neighbours would join together to perform collective tasks such as cutting turf or building a new dwelling
MFG	Meitheal Forbatha na Gaeltachta. LEADER (q.v.) group covering all Irish-speaking areas of the country
Muintir na Tíre	Rural development organisation. Trans.: "Community of the Land"
National Rehabilitation Board	Government agency responsible for helping disabled people to return to the workforce
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NESF	National Economic and Social Forum
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NOW	EU Community Initiative. ("New Opportunities for Women")

NWHB	North Western Health Board
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Oireachtas	Irish parliament, comprising of the Seanad (q.v.) and the Dáil (q.v)
OP	Operational Programme
OPRD	Operational Programme for Rural Development 1989-1993
OPW	Office of Public Works
PC	Partnership Company
PESCA	EU Community Initiative
PESP	Programme for Economic and Social Progress
PRP	European Union Community Initiative (Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of Ireland 1994-1999)
RAG	Ramelton Action Group
RIC	Royal Irish Constabulary
Roínn na Gaeltachta	Development authority responsible for indigenous industry in Irish-speaking areas
RTC	Regional Technical College
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
Senead Éireann	The Senate, the house of the Oireachtas (q.v.) elected by certain interest groups. Usually shortened to Senead
SFADCo	Shannon Free Airport Development Company
Sinn Féin	Irish political party. Trans.: “We Ourselves”
SMEs	Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
Spailpin Fanach	A hireling recruited at the Ulster “hiring fairs” of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

SPC	Strategic Policy Committee of Local Authority
SPEE	Second Programme for Economic Expansion
T.D.	Teachta Dála. Deputy to the Dáil (q.v.)
Tánaiste	Deputy Prime Minister
Taoiseach	Prime Minister
Teagasc	National Agricultural Research and Training Agency
UCG	University College Galway
UDC	Urban District Council
Úderás na Gaeltachta	Development authority responsible for the attraction of outside investment into Irish-speaking areas
VEC	Vocational Educational Committee
W.E.A.V.E.	Women in Employment and Vocational Education

Chapter One.

Introduction.

I. The Framework of the Study

County Donegal is the most northerly and geographically peripheral of Irish counties, sharing only a six-mile border with the rest of the Republic of Ireland, and separated from the eight other constituent counties of the Province of Ulster by one of the most contested and, at least until very recently, heavily fortified borders in western Europe. Socially and historically, it is a county of immense contrasts. Not popularly viewed as being truly a part of western Ireland, and cut off for most of this century from its natural hinterland of western Ulster, Donegal nevertheless retains elements familiar to both areas, containing the largest Irish-speaking region in Ireland, the Donegal Gaeltacht accounting for more than half the land area of the county, and also being home to the largest percentage population of Protestants of any county in the Republic.

Its marginalised position on the Isle of Ireland has led to decades of economic neglect, and a unique relationship with the highly centralised apparatus of the Irish state. Donegal's political tradition is one of rugged independence characterised by a strong adherence to Republican ideals, the physical symbols of partition a constant reminder of the struggles of the past, and the county has become famed for a style of political behaviour which has often been pursued with little reference to the national context. The county has also had a long history of collectivist "social movements", often led by charismatic religious figures in the classic Weberian mould, aimed at alleviating the poverty of local people and reversing the perceived indifference of the Irish state towards them. The most famous of these was a communitarian rural development and land reform scheme set up in the south of the county during the 1950s, inspired by a legendary priest named Father McDyer, which brought electricity for the first time to some of the remotest areas of the western seaboard and led to the revitalisation of the rural economy throughout southern Donegal. The legacy of such initiatives remains strong in the county, and this, combined with rural traditions associated with mutual co-operation and voluntarism, has instilled a firm ideological commitment

on the part of local people towards development activity, in all its various guises.

In recent years, the tripartite relationship between local people, the politician and the State has been modified and conditioned by the presence of another vessel of power. Ireland's accession to the then European Economic Community in 1973 initially brought few rewards to Donegal. However, the expansion of the Common Agricultural Policy and the advent of the Structural Funds have led to new opportunities for the people of the county in recent years, and since the late 1980s, Donegal has benefited substantially from a variety of programmes established by the European Union. The over-riding ethos of EU development planning is subsidiarity: the devolution of decision-making activity towards the lowest levels in the bureaucratic hierarchy. In this respect, the majority of the initiatives currently operating in Donegal incorporate an ethos of "bottom up" development planning, allowing (in theory) local groups to manage their own budgets and set spending priorities in their areas according to local needs. Each is administered by a board of directors, who are responsible for the management of the programme and decisions concerning the distribution of funds. The composition of most boards is based upon the "partnership principle", and encompass an equal representation from three distinct sectors: state bodies, "social partners" (Trade Unions and local employers) and the local community. The latter are elected by the members of local area-based groups every year, under regulations laid down by the government and the European Commission. Each programme also employs a number of staff, whose role it is to oversee the day-to-day operation of the programme, and to generate project applications from community groups or individual entrepreneurs who wish to apply for grant aid.

The impact of these new structures has led to profound changes in the way local development is organised in Donegal. Traditionally, the local county councillor (along with the parish priest) were the key actors in the process, the former exploiting his role as broker between the two spheres and linking local people and the instruments of the State through the provision of patronage or, more usually, brokerage "favours" granted in return for electoral support. However, politicians have largely been by-passed by many of the new EU structures, leading to their increasing marginalisation viz-a-viz the

overall development process and the creation of a profound schism between the political and developmental arenas. This has been compounded by the lack of any effective over-arching structures through which to co-ordinate development activity¹, along with the manner in which development activity is organised, with community groups, agencies and state bodies operating essentially as competitors rather than in co-operation. A further, related effect has been the rise in importance of professional development officers in recent years, who have, in many ways, assumed the mantle formerly occupied by politicians by virtue of their mediatory position between local people and the State/EU. Most importantly, perhaps, the “bottom up” nature of the EU development process has, for the first time, allowed certain sections of the local population to become involved directly in the development process as spokespersons for their own areas, often with control over substantial resources, something which has thrown into sharp relief the nature and meaning of local democracy. Competitive tensions between “participatory” and “elective” representation have become one of the principal axes around which the schism between the political and developmental spheres is focused, and is something which, I would suggest, has far wider implications in the context of the future of governance in the new Europe and the direction of European Integration in general.

In the following study, I wish to explore in detail some of the ways in which this fragmentation of development activity has arisen and is manifested in Donegal at the present time. Whilst the particularistic nature of development across Ireland and the EU is certainly an important explanatory factor, serving physically to separate the various actors and interest groups in a number of autonomous, hermetic ambits of development activity, my contention is that *social* processes are also equally significant. I adopt, as a general premise, the notion that *development* itself is a highly symbolic term, its interpretation varying widely according to the social context of its use, and I therefore approach the problem through a comparison of the different ways in which people involved in three distinctive development sectors (namely professional development activists, those involved in local community and voluntary groups and the members of Donegal County Council) understand, represent, utilise and reify the concept. In so doing, my aim is to demonstrate the

¹ The County Strategy Group, set up in each county in 1995 to draw together the chairpersons of LEADER and Partnership groups, County Enterprise Boards, County Tourism Committees and MCCs appears to have largely failed in breaking down this divide. (The meanings of these terms are given in the Glossary).

ways in which divergent attitudes towards and the meanings associated with *development* can disrupt the process of communication between social groups occupying different nodes in the overall system. In this way, I argue that the polarisation of development activity may be explained by the operation of what may be termed *competing discourses of development*.

This study seeks to extend knowledge in three principal fields of academic enquiry, namely the anthropology of development, the anthropology of the European Union and the anthropology of Ireland. This introductory chapter will therefore be concerned primarily with a review of existing literature in these areas, which will provide an overall theoretical framework for the chapters which follow.

II. The Anthropology of Development.

The oft-made distinction between the “anthropology of development” and “development anthropology”, used to differentiate, respectively, the study of development as a singular social phenomenon in its own right from the “practical” or “applied” dimensions of the discipline, has been attributed to Charsley (1982), and is widely accepted in the literature (see, for example, Grillo 1997: 2). However, the two traditions are by no means mutually-exclusive: ethnographic studies of development practice have often emanated from scholars working in the professional sphere, and academic interest in development activity has to a large extent reflected the nature of the prevailing relationship between anthropology and the policy-making arena. It is therefore worth prefacing this review of the anthropology of development with a brief outline of the historical circumstances which have led to the rise of the two sub-disciplines.

II.1. Development and Anthropology: An Historical Overview.

The application of anthropological knowledge to public policy has had a long and troublesome history, and the degree to which anthropologists have been involved in professional development practice, and the various roles they have adopted, have reflected the changing paradigms of international development and aid donation during the course of the century. In America, the Association for Applied Anthropology was established as early as 1933,

in response to Roosevelt's desire to make social science useful for solving social problems, and its journal, *Human Organisation*, was founded three years later. In Britain, the rise of the discipline was inextricably linked to the needs of colonialist administrators, and many of the degree courses established in leading universities during the early years of the century were specifically geared towards training future colonial officers. Thus the three leading figures in the academic development of the discipline in the U.K.- Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, and Evans-Pritchard- all called at various times in their careers for anthropology to become the scientific arm of the colonial experiment.

Whilst many would argue that it largely succeeded in this objective, the post-war decolonisation period witnessed a general withdrawal of anthropologists from the international development arena in both Europe and America. Following a brief flirtation with "community development projects" in the early 1950s, the subject almost entirely disappeared from public policy circles during the 1960s with the rise of development planning, in which experts trained in other fields, particularly economics, became the main players in international agencies. The foundations of development planning in the non-industrialised world may be traced back to the 1930s, and the riots in the West Indies following the collapse of commodity prices during and after the global depression, which served to shift the accent of development (at least in the rhetoric of British politicians), from that concerned with developing new markets for the benefits of international trade to that aimed at promoting the welfare of indigenous peoples. This was crystallised in the passing of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act by the British parliament in 1940 (Mair 1984: 23). However, it was the success of the Marshall Plan, and the subsequent involvement of the World Bank which were the most important factors in moulding the ideology of development in the post-war years. This ideology was founded upon the doctrine that development can be defined solely in terms of an increase in economic growth and per-capita income, and was heavily reliant upon the theories of Rostow (1960) (who envisaged a seven-stage process in the movement of a state from tradition to economic "take-off"), modernisation theory, notions of societal convergence, and neo-classical economics. These models stressed the perceived dichotomy between Western nations and the Third World (expressed in oppositions such as "industrial and agriculture", "urban and

rural", "rational and irrational" and "planned and unplanned") and created a distinctly inflexible and acontextual set of planning techniques which, in a large part, contributed to the general lack of success of many initiatives implemented during the 1950s and 1960s. Ideas of "trickle-down development" led to an increasing emphasis upon the promotion of innovation and entrepreneurship (Robertson 1984: 30; Hoben 1982: 355) and further exacerbated the narrow geographical, sectoral and social incidence of development programmes.

The re-emergence of applied or development anthropology can be traced to the mid-1970s, when, after almost two decades in the wilderness, the discipline once again found favour within multinational aid organisations and overseas development departments of western governments. The abject failure of the modernisation approach to tackle social problems- combined with a series of natural disasters which affected many areas of Africa and South Asia during the 1970s- heralded a new era of development planning in which "poverty-focused aid" and the "satisfaction of basic needs" became key foci (Robertson 1984: 58; Long 1985: 39).² Allied to this was an alteration in the methodology of development planning: policy-makers increasingly began to recognise that the "top-down" approach should be supplemented by an incorporation of the views of local people into decision-making regimes, and an emphasis upon "participatory" strategies and cultural sensitivity began to characterise the orthodoxy of international development (Escobar 1991: 663).³ This changing climate, along with theoretical advances made in anthropology during the first half of the 1970s (such as the emergence of sub-fields concentrating upon such problems as health-care delivery, education and the adoption of new technologies in traditional societies (Hoben 1982: 356), as well as a growth of research examining bureaucratic processes) led to the employment of many more anthropologists by international agencies, particularly those based in America and Scandinavia, and by national governments (Skar 1985: 12).

² Slim traces the emergence of this new development regime to the Cocoyoc Declaration made in Mexico by a group of development experts who met to attempt to find reasons for the failure of development during previous decades (1995: 143).

³ Clark sums up this perspective well:

Development is not a commodity to be weighed and measured by GNP statistics. It is process of change that enables people to take charge of their own destinies and realize [sic.] their full potential. It requires building up of confidence, skills, assets and freedoms necessary to achieve this goal (1991: 36).

These changes did not, at first, result in an increase of mainstream academic interest in development as a legitimate subject for social enquiry. The volume edited by Pitt (1976) represents the only major text which emerged as a direct result of the general improvement in relations between anthropologists and the development community during the 1970s, with approximately half of the contributions written by authors who were employed by various government and international agencies.⁴ By the early 1980s, however, the discipline on both sides of the Atlantic was becoming more receptive to critical appraisals of the assumptions and methods of development practice, fuelled in part by the impact of the Marxist and feminist critiques of the 1970s (along with a continuing re-appraisal of the historical role of anthropology as the "bastard child of colonialism"), and a turn towards what has come to be known as the post-modernist approach (Grillo 1997: 1-3). The collection of papers edited by Grillo and Rew (1985), which emerged from a conference sponsored by the Association of Social Anthropologists of Great Britain and the Commonwealth (a significant event in itself), set in train the publication of a series of largely edited texts during the late 1980s and 1990s couched firmly within the anthropology of development field.⁵ These included the volumes written or edited by Bennet and Bowen (1988), Croll and Parkin (1992), Long and Long (1992), Hobart (1993), Pottier (1993), Nelson and Wright (1995), Gardner and Lewis (1996) and Grillo and Stirrat (1997).

In reviewing this literature, Grillo has identified seven separate themes which characterise the approach germane to the anthropology of development:

- (1) A continuing diffidence on the part of anthropologists working in the development field;
- (2) an increasingly focused sense of the anthropological contribution defined in terms of what anthropologists say about culture and social relations;
- (3) opposition to the marginalisation of indigenous peoples and their knowledge;

⁴ In a review of the relationship between anthropology and the policy-makers published in 1980, Hinshaw was moved to remark that "the impact of anthropology on policy this past decade has been minimal" (1980: 498).

⁵ Donnan and McFarlane argue that an increasing interest in the anthropology of development may lead to the discipline becoming a legitimate "policy science" (1989: 6). The authors do admit, however, that the relationship between anthropologists and policy-makers is often a difficult one:

The overall picture which emerges from the social anthropologists' perspectives on the boundary between social anthropology and policy professionals is one of culture clash, of mutual incompatibility. The mutual incompatibility is expressed in terms of two stereotypical views of the assumptions and styles of each. The policy professionals emerge as important careerists who are obsessed with quantification, while the social anthropologists appear as sensitive to cultural niceties but unable to translate knowledge into suggestions for action, as theoretically and ethically arrogant (ibid.: 11).

(4) a keen interest in bottom-up solutions and in mechanisms of empowerment; (5) cynicism about the aims and practices of development; (6) the emergence of critical views of development and the development process; (7) the advocacy by some of alternative ways of doing both development and anthropology (1997: 11).

One of the most significant ways in which anthropologists have contributed to development studies as a whole has been in relation to discourse analysis, something which, among other things, has served to highlight the discrepancies between the language of development planning used in development agencies and that employed by the “targets” of their activities, local people themselves (Hobart 1993: 12; Grillo 1997: 11).⁶ Given that this theoretical approach forms the overall paradigm for this study, we now turn our attention to the work of a number of key authors prominent in this field.

II.2. Discourses of Development.

Discourse is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as “talk, conversation, dissertation, treatise, sermon” (as a noun), and “to talk, converse; hold forth in speech or writing on a subject” (as a verb). As used in social science, however, it is clearly much more than is suggested by these brief definitions. In the work of Michel Foucault, with whom the term is most readily associated, discourse is viewed as a group of statements bounded to what he terms a “referential”, which together operate in such a way as to reveal underlying paradigms about the nature of social processes in the actions of communication. Discourse for Foucault consists of

...laws of possibility, rules of existence for the objects that are named, designated or described within it, and for the relations that are affirmed or denied within it (Foucault 1972: 91).

Language is therefore a part of discourse, but the concept also refers to that which is represented through language, as well as serving to locate the subject in the particular social nexus within which they are operating. It therefore includes the thoughts, structures, knowledges, contexts, attitudes

⁶ It is significant that the most recent volume of the list cited above, that edited by Grillo and Stirrat, is entitled *Discourses of Development*.

and processes that together constitute the way in which language is used. In this sense, then, all discursive actions are competitive in that they can only be understood in terms of opposition to that which is *not* being represented or revealed within them.⁷

For Foucault, the social significance of discourse flows from, and is reflected in, the wider system of power relations prevailing within a social group or society (cf. Foucault 1980a, 1980b). In this formulation, power is “exercised” rather than “possessed”, and cannot be understood with reference only to large-scale empirical observations of political and economic domination and oppression in the way that Marx (or more recently Steven Lukes⁸) applied the concept (Hoy 1986). Rather, power is a product of everyday social practice in which individuals are continually confronted with situations where an unequal dialectic relationship is inherent in the encounter. And usually, inequality is derived from (differential) knowledge, which is itself articulated through discourse. It is by mapping out this “micro-physics” of power that a fuller understanding of what Foucault terms the wider “social battle” may be gained. Thus,

Power comes from below...there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations...Power is not something that is acquired, seized or shared...power is exercised from innumerable points (Foucault 1980a: 94, quoted in Walzer 1986: 54).

Foucault’s ideas, which we are able to deal with only briefly here, have been heavily criticised on the grounds of empirical and historical accuracy, as well as in relation to the political implications of his theories (see, for example, Smart 1986; Taylor 1986). However, his general concern with the “everyday” and the “micro-scale” have found favour with anthropology, a discipline which cautions against the use of generalising theoretical constructs to explain

⁷ In the words of Sherzer:

Discourse includes and relates both textual patterning...and a situating of language in natural contexts of use. Context is to be understood in two senses here: first *the social and cultural backdrop*, the ground rules and assumptions of language usage; and second, the immediate, ongoing and emerging actualities of speech events. Obviously the textuality of a brief greeting is slim, the essence of its structure being the socio-cultural and interactional matters lurking behind it. On the other hand the textual structure of a three hour myth narration will be quite intricate and complicated. Nonetheless it too intimately involves *sociocultural and interactional features and these must be attended to analytically* (1987: 296, emphasis added).

² See, for example, Lukes (1974).

observable social reality. In this respect, the application of discourse analysis within development studies is increasingly being viewed as a useful medium through which the social and political processes underpinning all development actions may be deconstructed and highlighted. (See, as examples, Arce and Long 1993; Apthorpe 1985, 1986; Croll and Parkin 1992; Crush 1995; Escobar 1991, 1995a, 1995b; Gardner and Lewis 1996; Quarles van Ufford 1993; and Robertson 1984, along with the collection edited by Grillo and Stirrat 1997). The work of these authors demonstrates how a critical appreciation of the role of discourse may be used to illuminate the power relationships inherent in the interaction between decision-makers and those who are affected by their decisions. Their theories also serve as a rejoinder to the rather pessimistic view of Escobar, who argues that

...development anthropology, for all its claim to relevance to local problems, to cultural sensitivity, and to access to interpretive holistic methods, has done no more than recycle, and dress in more localised fabrics, the discourses of modernisation and development (1991: 677).

The arguments of three prominent scholars in this field will serve to illustrate the general approach of this research.

In a paper published in 1986, Apthorpe's concern is with "policy discourse", something he explicitly opposes to "political" and "official" discourse, on the grounds that it "justifies itself as being professional and scientific" (ibid.: 377). He begins his analysis by presenting an advertisement for specialist staff required to form a team designated as the "Agricultural and Field Trials, Studies, Extension and Monitoring Unit", to work on a rural development project sponsored by the World Bank in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea. The advertisement states that staff will be involved in the "study [of] the subsistent farming systems of the Province and assemble basic knowledge to address the existing malnutrition problems...and ensure that data collected during the project is processed, analysed and presented expeditiously in a form readily usable by provincial planner and policy makers" (quoted, ibid.: 379). In pointing out that the phraseology contained in the text reveals a number of important characteristics about the way in which the particular agency perceives the development process (e.g. that

'problems' are the main resources for policy, that the "knowledge" that the project will generate is the only *rational* knowledge, and that there is an unproblematic relationship between policy and its outcomes), Apthorpe argues that "rather than policy capturing a developmental initiative or intervention, policy is made the captive of a discursive intervention" (ibid.: 380), leading him to suggest that "a crucial aspect of all policy practice is actually and specifically what and who is included, and what is ignored and excluded" (ibid.: 382). All policy discourse, according to the author, is couched in terms of a multitude of binary opposites, between what is held to be "good", and that which is considered "bad", examples including politicians-officials, insiders-outsiders, consultation-corruption, planned economy-market economy, etc. In this way, the discourse seeks to objectify and "naturalise" both the agency's own activities and those that their activities are aimed at, thereby serving to construct an impartial "scientific" reality which may obscure and falsify the multiple realities which actually exist. The discursive "style" of policy-making is the principal method through which this process occurs, applying labels to actions which usually have meaning only within the discourse itself. Apthorpe concludes his paper by stating that:

Development policy discourse contains within itself a double escape from responsibility. On the one hand it distinguishes itself from its practices and operations by treating them as something else called implementation. On the other hand, in so far as an experience of practice is occasionally present, development policy discourse has recourse to neat, easily available and powerfully constructed sets of escape routes. It happens that many of these are merely terminological, like describing the most important aspects of what does actually happen as "leakages", "interferences", "exigencies", "constraints" and so on. (ibid.: 387).

Apthorpe's ideas provide important theoretical insights in highlighting the use of discourse analysis in the understanding of development. However, his work is largely bereft of practical examples, and for a demonstration of how this type of approach may be applied in a more rigorously empirical manner, we must look elsewhere. In this respect, Quarles van Ufford (1993) has illustrated the way in which the technique may be utilised in the

deconstruction of, not only the modes of discourse of policy-makers, but also the outcomes of their decisions, through an extremely lucid analysis of the strategies employed by the Indonesian and Dutch governments in a regional development project in Indonesia.

The joint project was initiated in the mid-1970s, with the principal aim of establishing a system of cohesive development planning in the region in order to bring about lasting change for the indigenous population. However, following a multitude of publications and reports, most of which demanded the generation of more research and data, the donor agency decided that the project had failed in its initial aims, and fired its director working in the field. The strategy was then re-focused with an entirely different set of methodologies, designed to involve local people as the key actors in the development process in harmony with the principles of "bottom-up" development planning. In Quarles van Ufford's words,

...for the survival of the development scheme, two things became of paramount importance: the allocated funds had to be spent and the new discourse of the participatory approach upheld (ibid.: 136).

One of the major goals of the project was to introduce a system of pump irrigation into the region which would be owned and controlled by local people themselves, via village associations established by a Presidential decree enacted some years previously. A thorough evaluation of the project was carried out two years after it had begun by a team from the research department of the sponsoring agency. The author states that,

The report shattered the image of a 'bottom-up' approach, as it became clear that the local organisations did not really represent the peasants, nor could they be expected to function effectively. (ibid.: 136).

The local organisations were being used by local village heads to exert patronage favours for their family and friends, and the pump scheme as a whole was regarded with "scepticism or outright opposition" by the villagers themselves (ibid.: 137). However, this report was treated with disdain by

both the officers working in the field and the staff of the donor agency. It was never translated into Indonesian, and its conclusions were never acted upon, the programme as a whole continuing to be regarded as an illustration of the benefits of local participation in development projects. The author concludes that the claim of local involvement was essentially a rhetorical device, designed to justify the activities of the agency rather than reflecting a genuine desire to implement a participative programme.⁹

Both Apthorpe and Quarles van Ufford have emphasised the role of a particular form of technocratic discourse in alleviating a specific and recurrent problem encountered by development agencies, i.e. the need to maintain the *appearance* of active local participation when faced with situations where very little in fact exists.¹⁰ The power of this discourse is derived from its reductionist tendencies, in which local social organisation- and people themselves- are classified according to pre-existing assumptions held by policy-makers and planners operating in a sphere often far removed from social reality. In this respect, Wood (1985) has argued that the politics of development planning, which in his view often serves to compound existing relationships of inequality, domination and control, can be best understood as an exercise in "development labelling". In noting the growth of what he terms "target population terminology" in the discourse of international development, he asserts that the application of labels such as "landless", "sharecropper", "single parent", "refugee", "youth" or even "woman" seeks to aggregate individuals under collective umbrella nouns which, far from being "natural" categories, are in fact "evidence that choices have been made

⁹ As the author states:

...there is discrepancy in the language of the development agency, i.e. a stress on the 'bottom-up approach' and 'local homogeneity', which creates an image of the active involvement of peasants in the project's activities, and the virtual absence of any such involvement as observed by the anthropologists in the study team. Yet project staff were required to substantiate the notion of 'active involvement' in their reporting to the Indonesian officials and the western sponsoring agency. The concept of 'local organisation' served this important purpose. The concept suggested that the peasants had done their homework, that links had been established with the staff members, in short that the goals of the project were taken seriously. The project's survival depended on this as the official documents required a participatory approach. A contradiction emerged. For the need to know what was going on locally and the need to remain ignorant of what was happening were inextricably connected. This became clear when the project staff fairly aggressively opposed the findings of the research report. The project's survival depended upon maintaining-or creating- sufficient ignorance about what was happening locally. There was no viable alternative (ibid.: 138).

¹⁰ Not surprisingly, it is the World Bank which has been the focus of much of the criticism in this regard. In the view of Hildyard,

...when development agencies such as the World bank begin to pursue participatory programmes, those who have past experience of the Bank tend to be wary. "Consultation" tends to be desultory; local people are heard, even listened to, but ultimately because their involvement lends credibility and legitimacy to a project. Far from being a transformative process in which local people exert control over decision-making, "participation" becomes a well-honed tool for engineering consent to projects and programmes whose framework has already been determined in advance- a means of top down planning to be imposed from the bottom up (1998: 3-4).

between which designation of people to adopt" (1985: 353). This process applies at the agency level as well: following Apthorpe, Wood demonstrates that the use of terms such as "participation", "community development" and "decentralisation" to describe the "services provided" by a donor agency acts in order to "neutralise" (or, in Foucauldian terms "normalise") bureaucratic activities which are, by their very nature, asymmetric and often divisive.

...labels reveal more about the process of authoritative designation, agenda-setting and so on than about the characteristics of the labelled. Indeed,...labels misrepresent or more deliberately falsify the situation and the role of the labelled. In this sense, labels do in effect reveal this relationship of power between the giver and bearer of the label (ibid.: 353).

As will be seen over the forthcoming chapters, there are a number of important parallels between the analysis offered by these authors and the situation pertaining to development sponsored by the European Union in County Donegal, in which the "bottom-up" approach is absolutely central to the activities of the sponsoring agency on the ground. This leads on to a more fundamental observation. Development research in the social sciences is, at the present time, overwhelmingly dominated by studies emanating from non-European contexts, and there has to date been remarkably little published research exploring development in Europe from a comparativist perspective. The increasingly sophisticated literature emanating from social scientists working in the "Developing World", some of which we have discussed above, is highly pertinent to Europe, but as yet very few authors have explored the relevance of this theoretical framework for the model of development currently being promoted by the EU. The salience of this observation assumes an even greater significance when one considers that the evolution of the latter has been informed by, and has paralleled, the experience of development outside the Continent. There are, for example, many similarities between the emphasis placed by the EU upon devolution and local empowerment, and the "participatory" approaches towards development which at present characterises the orthodoxy of other international agencies. For many anthropologists and sociologists, however, development remains almost exclusively a "non-western" phenomenon; in this respect, it is hoped that

this study will contribute to a bridging of this gap.

In the third section of this introductory chapter, then, we turn our attention towards the EU itself, through an examination of firstly, the various themes which characterise an emerging anthropology of the European Union, and secondly, the historical circumstances which have led to the current paradigm of EU-sponsored development practice.

III. The European Union.

III.1. Understanding the European Union. Anthropological Approaches.

It is now widely recognised in the academy that the European Union represents the major agent of social change affecting western Europe at the present time. It is indeed surprising, therefore, that anthropology has been generally slow to react to the enormous impact of the EU in western Europe, something which impinges upon almost all aspects of people's lives, from what they buy in the shops or what job they do, to the ways in which they vote in elections or how they feel about their own national or regional identity. As long ago as 1975, Jeremy Boissevain, in his oft-cited introductory essay to the edited volume *Beyond the Community: Social Process in Europe*, called for a greater awareness of national and global processes in anthropological analyses and more account to be taken of the accelerating pace of social change, focused specifically around the influence of bureaucratic and political regimes upon the incorporation of previously marginalised groups into wider structures. One might suggest that his vision has yet to be realised. In one respect, it could be argued in defence that the sheer pace of change in Europe has caught anthropologists off-guard; on the other hand, it could also be stated with impunity that the discipline- in common with the other social sciences- has found itself theoretically ill-equipped to deal in a rigorous manner with what has occurred in Europe during the past decade. The expansion of the EU, both economically as well as geographically, has served to place the organisation, perhaps for the first time, at the absolute centre of political debate in many European countries. Events such as the instigation of the Single European Act in 1985, the doubling of the Structural Funds budget in 1988, the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, the accession of Finland, Austria and Sweden in 1994, the advent of the Single Currency

in 1999 and the proposed expansion of the EU into the former Eastern Bloc countries are all of enormous significance for the peoples of Europe. The EU can no longer be perceived simply as a free trade organisation or a context for economic cooperation: it now represents a major ideological force which has served to bring into question the very nature of the western European model of the nation-state, democratic government and sovereignty (Wilson 1993a).

Having said this, however, social research currently being conducted in Europe is displaying an increasing awareness of the importance of European Union policies (cf. Pierson 1996: 124), and a plethora of texts and journal articles have appeared in recent years examining their impact on the day-to-day experiences of the peoples of the region. Of all the disciplines within the social sciences, anthropology (although paradoxically it has contributed the least) is perhaps the most conveniently placed to describe and explain these changes. It is, above all else, a holistic subject, capable of marrying many of the concerns which form the exclusionary (and jealously guarded!) kernels of other fields, and has always prided itself on recognising the fundamental importance of, and, crucially, prioritising, the emic view of the populations under scrutiny. The anthropology of today is also informed by a long tradition of social research in western Europe, one of the world's most diverse cultural areas, and is perhaps the most historically sensitive of all of the social sciences. Most importantly, the interaction between national, regional, local and personal identities has been one of the principal themes in the anthropological study of European societies (cf. Goddard et al 1994; Cole 1977). In recognition of these facts, a number of authors have recently called for a greater involvement by anthropologists in the debate over the meaning and future direction of the "new Europe" (see, for example, Smith 1992; Hedetoft 1994). Nevertheless, this enormous academic potential is far from being fully realised at the present time, something which stems primarily from a lack of public funding for anthropological research as well as the allied problem of the high cost of fieldwork, which necessarily involves a long period of "immersion" in the culture under investigation. Anthropology is far less established in the European academy than, say, sociology or human geography, a fact which has led to feelings of intellectual insularity on the part of its practitioners, as their insights too often remain within the boundaries of their own discipline.

Although anthropological enquiry into the EU is presently at an early stage, the scholarship that has been conducted thus far has tended to coalesce around two distinct research agendas, corresponding, on the one hand, to an examination of the emergence of a European polity and "culture" at the level of European institutions themselves, and on the other, to the study of the impact of the organisation's activities upon, and interaction with, local social groups across the Continent. Wilson (1995) has provided a useful distinction here between research "from above" and research "from below", thereby dispensing with the rather clumsy and ill-defined concepts of "core" and "periphery" which have been the usual medium for describing different levels of the EU's operation. With regards to the former, a number of notable publications have appeared in recent years addressing such interrelated areas as the EU's "cultural policy" (e.g. Shore 1993; Shore and Black 1992, 1994), the particular historiographical discourse promoted by the organisation (e.g. McDonald 1996), the tension between national and European sentiments among EU employees and politicians (e.g. Abélès 1993; Bellier 1997; Shore 1995) and the ethnography of EU institutions themselves (e.g. Abélès 1992, 1993; Zabusky 1995).

In contrast, research "from below" is characterised by a more diverse range of fields of enquiry, and is therefore lacking a similar level of analytical coherence. Perhaps unsurprisingly, one of the most profitable research strands has been concerned with the impact of the Common Agricultural Policy across Europe. Thus Wilson (1988, 1989b) has provided a lucid account of the way Irish farmers in eastern Ireland have adapted to EC membership, with ramifications for political and class affiliations, whilst Shutes (1991, 1993) has examined the implications of the CAP for the future of small-farmers, again from an Irish perspective. In a similar vein, Jurjus (1993) has examined the effects of the Single European Act and Maastricht Treaty upon Dutch and Spanish farmers, arguing that local culture is an important variable in the understanding of differing responses to external influences in the two countries. Other authors have documented the responses to the process of European Integration on the part of specific interest groups, highlighting the way in which the adoption of supranational treaties has been experienced and negotiated in local areas. Most notable in this respect is the work conducted by LiPuma (1989) and LiPuma and Meltzoff (1994) among Spanish fishermen, and Sheehan's analysis of the 1987 referendum on the Single European Act

in Ireland (Sheehan 1991). Giordano's (1987) account of the "wine war" between small farmers and agricultural co-operatives in France and Italy could also be taken as an example of this research theme. A further element of the anthropology of the EU "from below" has been concerned with the implications of European integration for national borders, and the populations who live around them ("borderlanders") (e.g. Kockel 1991; Ruane and Todd 1991; Wilson 1993b; Parman 1993). A nascent research axis is also emerging in relation to the EU's role in the promotion of cross-border and transnational networks, an area in which the practical manifestations of the EU's cultural policies- in terms of the organisation's attempts to generate pan-Europeanist sentiment across the Continent- are at their most visible (e.g. Cinnirella 1993; Smith 1995). Further research in this area may therefore lead to a conjunction between the two broad fields of anthropological enquiry into the EU, which have been pursued largely in isolation thus far.

The current study is located firmly within the anthropology of the EU "from below". It represents an attempt to further existing knowledge by focusing upon the way in which specific EU programmes have been implemented and are experienced by local groups on the ground, an area which represents a largely neglected area in the scholarship that has been undertaken to date (cf. Bull 1993: 41). The studies that have been briefly outlined above have, almost without exception, been concerned with the social implications of macro-scale policies (such as European treaties or market-regulating regimes) emanating from Brussels on local groups, studies in which the EU is portrayed very much as an *external* force driving social change. However, the policies implemented over the past decade aimed at the devolution and subsidiarity of the EU's activities have brought the organisation far closer to the European populace than was hitherto the case. Development agencies charged with the administration of European programmes in local areas, for example, have emerged as a highly significant medium through which the EU and the locale are connected. It has therefore become possible to analyse the direct interaction between the model- or discourse- of development promoted by the EU, and that held by those who are affected by these policies. The background to the current regime of EU development is examined in detail below, in order to contextualise these ideas and to provide an historical backdrop to the analysis of EU programmes operating in county Donegal, which forms one of the main thrusts of the chapters which follow.

III.2. The Reform of the Structural Funds.

In August 1987, the European Commission submitted a series of proposals to the European Council of Ministers aimed at reforming the Structural Funds budget of the EU. This was motivated by a recognition that in a Single Market, certain regions- by virtue of their inherent geographical and economic disadvantages- would lose out in the absence of external aid, as economic growth became concentrated within the more favoured “core areas” of the continent. The proposals were adopted in full by the Council during 1988, and came into force on January 1st. 1989. A number of principles underpinned the various reforms, which taken together, constituted a major change in the way the Structural Funding regime had been organised until then. These included the concentration of assistance to incorporate a greater regional dimension in Structural Fund spending through the adoption of five specific “Objectives”¹¹, a move to a programme rather than project-orientated approach, the incorporation of multi-annual planning in line with the economic policies of national governments, an enhanced commitment to the monitoring and evaluation of spending at national and EU level, and the introduction of the principles of “additionality” (by which EU actions and funds would complement, rather than replace, those emanating from national governments) and “partnership” in the administration of Structural Fund programmes (Armstrong 1995: 2; Coyle 1996: 286). In addition, the budget devoted to the three funds was to be doubled from seven to fourteen billion ECUs (1988 prices) by 1993 (Mulreany and Roycroft 1993: 197), amounting to one-quarter of total EU spending (Grahl 1996: 489).

The reform of the Structural Funds was accompanied by the publication of a document which set out the European Commission’s philosophy towards rural development in greater detail, and was to have a lasting impact upon the strategic approach adopted subsequently by the EU across the Continent. *The Future of Rural Society* represented the first official acknowledgement by

¹¹ To this end, five specific “objectives” were created governing the regional focus of overall Structural Fund spending. These are summarised below:

Objective 1.	Development of lagging regions. (Defined as regions with a per capita GDP at or below 75% of the EU average).
Objective 2.	Development of regions affected by industrial decline.
Objective 3.	Combating long-term unemployment.
Objective 4.	Aiding the occupational integration of young people.
Objective 5a.	Facilitating the adjustment of agricultural structures.
Objective 5b.	Promotion of rural development.

the EU that the CAP was no longer capable of maintaining employment levels and incomes in isolation, and that additional structures and instruments were required to bring about socio-economic convergence in Europe. Against a background illustrating the problems facing rural areas (including depopulation, isolation, un- and underemployment, intensification of production processes, environmental stress and the shrinkage of markets for agricultural produce), the document outlined a series of recommendations for the design of initiatives aimed at diversifying the economic base of rural areas. Chief among these was a recognition of the value of an "integrated approach" to development, along with an emphasis upon the involvement of local residents in the decision-making processes (CEC 1988: *inter alia*).¹²

Whilst the EU had financed a number of integrated rural development projects on a pilot basis since the early 1980s under the Guidance section of the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF)¹³ and as part of two anti-poverty initiatives¹⁴, these were rather piecemeal in fashion and were not implemented across the Continent. The experience gained from them was, however, important in shaping the general strategy outlined in *The Future of Rural Society* and EU-sponsored development in Europe subsequently. The strong emphasis upon local involvement was reflected in the concluding section of the report:

This communication, and the proposals and suggestions it contains, reflects the Commission's concern to avoid serious economic and social disruption and to preserve a European rural development model based on the promotion of family farms and balanced regional planning. The Community's approach is a development approach, which means changes in structure which the Community must support.

¹² The following passage encapsulates the approach envisaged in the document:

Mutually consistent (integrated) regional development programmes are vital if the schemes launched are to be properly interrelated. Rural development must be both multi-disciplinary in conception and multi-sectoral in application...//...Alongside local authorities, more and more semi-governmental or private rural associations, pursuing economic or social aims, are being set up. Springing from the rural environment itself, they take initiatives and organise common ventures. If properly exploited, they could be a decisive tool for the promotion of rural development, acting as catalysts and organising forces on whom Community action should rely to a greater extent. It might even be desirable to initiate a multi-agent process in which leaders of such associations and local representatives should play a central role. The establishment, under rural development programmes, of appropriate organisational and guidance facilities could therefore, perhaps, be organised at local level. Such facilities would include the rural associations, and operating aids for these facilities would be included in the programmes (CEC 1988: 36).

¹³ These were located in Lozère in France, the South East of Belgium, the Western Isles of Scotland and in southern Spain and Greece (CEC 1988: 59).

¹⁴ These initiatives are discussed in detail in chapter three, section III.5.

Exploitation of the indigenous potential of rural regions will play a key role in this context. The promotion of indigenous development by no means precludes contributions from outside, but these contributions will be in support of and not in place of indigenous potential (ibid.: 67).

The Future of Rural Society represented a watershed in EU development policy, and the principles enshrined within it- surrounding devolution, localised decision-making and partnership- constituted a genuinely new approach to development in Europe, with implications extending far beyond rural regions (Ray 1997: 348). These were to receive further attention in subsequent EU reports and legislation which appeared during the early 1990s. Most notable in this respect was the 1991 publication *The European Community and Rural Development*, which explored in greater detail the relationship between these three principles and the wider process of European Integration (cf. Shorthall 1994: 252).

The 1988 reforms have remained in place in a relatively unchanged form during the past decade, although a certain degree of refinement took place with the advent of the Treaty of European Union (the Maastricht Treaty), ratified in 1992. This provided for an increase in the population covered by "Objective 1" (lagging regions) to over one-quarter of the EU total (largely through the incorporation of East Germany), and the introduction of a new "Objective 4" to afford assistance to workers adapting to industrial change. A Cohesion Fund was also created, through which financial support was made available for transport infrastructure and environmental improvement projects in countries with less than 90% of average per capita GNP (identified as Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Greece).¹⁵ In terms of the future direction of Structural Fund spending, perhaps the most important aspect of the Treaty was the emphasis that was placed on "subsidiarity", the principle that "decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizens" (Article A), i.e. at the lowest possible or effective level in the political and bureaucratic hierarchy. Although the term had been mentioned in previous EU documentation, the Treaty served to enshrine subsidiarity as the guiding philosophy of the EU's constitution. Article 3b detailed some of the practical manifestations of

¹⁵ The Maastricht treaty also introduced other important principles into the EU's guiding constitution, including the extension of the concept of EU citizenship, provision for a common foreign and (through the Western European Union) security policy, extension of the EU's social policy, and various institutional changes. (For a review of the impact of the Maastricht Treaty, see Bull 1993).

application of subsidiarity, stating that the “Community shall not go beyond what is necessary to achieve the objectives of the Treaty” and that it will only engage in activities which require a wider policy-making context than that provided by member states operating in isolation. In other words, the principle placed explicit constraints upon the power and scale of EU decision-making, and for this reason, has been described as “the word that saved Maastricht” (Hearl 1995: 3). Whilst the term was relatively new in the context of the EU, the concept it seeks to describe has a long antecedence in Catholic social thought and, more recently, in the policies of Christian Democrat parties across Europe (O’Neill 1995: 2-3). In post-war Germany, it has also come to be recognised- somewhat ironically, perhaps- as the key principle of Federalism (Hearl *ibid.*: 2).

Subsidiarity has been heavily criticised on a number of counts since its introduction in the early 1990s. A leading article in the *Guardian* newspaper in 1994, for example, characterised it as “the policy of devolving power to the level at which the definer exercises political control”¹⁶; Hearl, similarly, argues that “it is a mess as a practical proposition” (*ibid.*: 5). Despite its undoubted definitional opacity, however, it has become enshrined in the arrangements governing the operation of the Structural Funds, and, through the allied principle of partnership, has provided for an increased level of co-operation between the Commission and national, regional and local bodies in the administration of development programmes. Indeed, partnership has come to be viewed as a model of subsidiarity in practice (Armstrong 1995: 2). Article four of the Framework Regulation adopted by the Council in June 1988 defined partnership as :

...close consultations between the Commission, the member state concerned and the competent authorities designated by the latter at national, regional and local level, with each party acting as a partner in pursuit of a common goal.¹⁷

This rather narrow definition has since been refined and extended to encompass sub-state partnership arrangements between local state representatives, “social partners” (Trade Unions and employers) and

¹⁶ *Guardian*, 5th. April 1994.

¹⁷ Quoted in Armstrong 1995: 3.

community actors.¹⁸ The resolution of these relationships “on the ground” in Ireland is one of the primary concerns of this study; for now, it will be enough to note that the partnership approach has become the primary vehicle through which Structural Fund spending is administered.

Of the plethora of development programmes which were launched by the EU in the wake of *The Future of Rural Society*, none encapsulated the principles contained in the document more fully than the LEADER I programme¹⁹, which ran from 1991 to 1994. This was a pan-European rural development initiative operating in Objective 1 and Objective 5(b) regions, the aims of which were to

...demonstrate the importance of direct support for joint development initiatives launched by local communities [through] programming and management at the level of the selected area by official, economic and social partners combined within a ‘local action group’. (LEADER Magazine, *passim*).

A total budget of 442m ECUs was devoted to the programme, distributed as block grants to 217 approved local groups across the Continent. Although national government departments were charged with the day-to-day administration of the initiative, LEADER I had a strongly European flavour. The criteria for project approval were set by the European Commission, with five categories of measures providing the overall framework for funding allocations: Technical Support, Vocational Training, Rural Tourism, Local Agricultural and Fisheries Products, and Small Firms, Craft Enterprises and Local Services. In addition, all local groups were linked together in a network managed by a LEADER co-ordinating unit in Brussels, through which over 60 transnational colloquia, seminars and exchange visits were organised during the life-time of the programme, involving 85% of the groups and over 1400 people. The unit was also responsible for the publication of a

¹⁸ The EU’s “Cork Declaration on Rural Europe”, issued in 1996, encapsulated the strong relationship envisaged between the principles of partnership and subsidiarity, and rural development policy:

Given the diversity of the Union’s rural areas, rural development policy must follow the principle of subsidiarity. It must be as decentralised as possible and based on partnership and co-operation between all levels concerned (local, regional, national and European). The emphasis must be on participation and a “bottom-up” approach, which harness the creativity and solidarity of rural communities. Rural development must be local and community-driven within a coherent European framework (CEC 1996: 3)

¹⁹ LEADER is an acronym for “Liaisons Entre Actions de Développement de L’Economie Rurale” (“Links Between Actions for the Development of the Rural Economy”). In EU documentation the titles of Community Initiatives are often reproduced in lower case letters. However, in academic studies, the LEADER programme is usually represented in caps, and we will follow this convention here.

LEADER I has been subject to a number of evaluatory analyses, conducted by both academics and professional consultants, which have concentrated largely on how the programme has been implemented by specific LEADER groups in Europe.²⁰ Examples from the British Isles include the reports prepared by the Arkleton Trust (1994) and Black and Conway (1995), in relation to the Western Isles, Skye and Lochalsh LEADER group in Western Scotland, Midmore, Ray and Tregear's analysis of the South Pembrokeshire LEADER project and the study by Kearney, Boyle and Walsh (1995) of the experience of LEADER I in Ireland. Most of these studies have been concerned with the specific grant-aiding activities of each group, and there have to date been few studies which have examined the implications of this type of initiative for social and political change in Europe. However, the research that has been conducted thus far in this area suggests a number of profitable research avenues which may lead to a productive interdisciplinary dialogue developing in the future. As a Community Initiative, the LEADER programme may be viewed as an encapsulation of the European Integration project in microcosm, and therefore reflects many of the broader themes associated with the process, focused around such interrelated areas as the tensions between local, regional and national dimensions of social identity, new structures of governance in Europe, the implications of transnational networks and regionalism for the articulation of Europeanist sentiments, and potential conflicts associated with the process of European integration.

Ray (1996, 1997, 1998), for example, has demonstrated how the LEADER I programme was utilised by one group in Scotland to articulate a sense of shared regional identity based around the cultural symbol of the Gael. He notes how the programme enabled those involved in its administration to appeal to a complex of traditional rural values which emphasised the importance of the "strong community", the language, crofting and a topophilic sense of place to local culture. The author argues that the fact this "act of opportunism" (1997: 359) was couched in opposition to other values, associated with Scottish landlordism and the wider British state, suggests that the EU project is characterised by a dialectic in which the promotion of localism and regionalism is accompanied by wider goals of forging an "ever

²⁰ The operation of this programme and of its successor (LEADER II) in Ireland is explored in detail in chapters four and five, so only a brief review of this literature is provided here.

closer union between the peoples of Europe". Similarly, Smith (1995) has provided a comprehensive analysis of the way local action groups responsible for the administration of the initiative in three European States (namely, France, Britain and Spain) have coalesced around the transnational LEADER network. He reveals that the individuals involved are increasingly moving away from traditional policy-making frameworks and developing autonomous systems for intervention which rely more upon the sharing of experiences with other groups than any involvement they may have with public authorities. Although the situation is far from uniform across the three countries, Smith asserts that in certain areas (most notably Brittany in France, and Devon and Cornwall, in the U.K.) LEADER has enabled groups to exploit new pathways of interaction with other nodes in the political system and thereby subvert the traditional relationship between the locale and the state.²¹

Both Smith and Ray have analysed the LEADER initiative from the point-of-view of the sociological and political scientific literature on European Integration. Certain assumptions are made in this literature which tend to detract from its analytical rigour, most notably in relation to the development process itself. In this study, a different approach is adopted which takes as its cue the literature on development in non-European contexts. By adopting as a starting point a recognition that development is a problematic and highly-contested social field, we seek to illuminate the practical dimensions of the European project, i.e. the way in which it is experienced by local people in north-west Ireland, and to thereby further the understanding of the EU and development in Europe. In this way, it is hoped that the analysis presented over the coming pages represents an embryonic attempt to create a dialogue between these two heretofore dichotomous research strands.

²¹ My own investigations in Ireland suggests although LEADER groups have experienced severe difficulty in encapsulating the EU's goal of promoting "bottom-up" development, significant inter-regional and inter-sectoral networks have emerged since the early 1990s. Partly as a response to the efforts made by the "Rainbow" (Fine Gael/Labour-led) coalition to move the context of political activity away from Dublin during their three-year tenure in office (1994 to 1997), LEADER groups are now availing themselves of the opportunity to come together as participants in various "policy forums" and therefore influence national policy-making. As an example, a meeting of the National Economic and Social Forum held in County Cavan in April 1996 included delegates from most of the twenty-six LEADER groups in Ireland, who put forward a proposal to the Minister for Agriculture for a national strategy for rural development, something which is, at the time of writing, being prepared by the current government. Ireland does, however, remain overwhelmingly centralised politically, something which continues to create enormous obstacles for the development of genuine subsidiarity and devolution (cf. Laffan 1989). Given that LEADER groups essentially represent a channel for the interpretation of the EU's philosophy for the development of rural areas in Europe at local level, it is highly tempting to view their ability to lobby governments in this way in terms of a further mechanism through which the EU is influencing the strategy of public action nationally. More evidence than that which is available at the present time would be required to test the validity of this assertion, however, since it is clear that there can be no "easy fit" between the values of the EU and those charged with interpreting the institution's policies "on the ground". This point is considered in more detail in subsequent chapters.

This is the overall theoretical *framework* within which the following study is organised. However, the aim of this study is not only to advance knowledge of the way development activity is influenced by social process and action; it is also spatially and temporally rooted in a particular place over a period of time, and, as such, is also intended to contribute to, and extend, the general ethnography of Ireland. I spent twelve consecutive months living in county Donegal, and whilst the research was focused specifically upon the various development communities within the county, I realised very early in the fieldwork that it was impossible to separate my principal fields of enquiry from the more general themes of Irish social life; indeed, that the value of the study lay in constructing an ethnographic portrait of the relationship between the EU, the State and the locale. It is necessary, therefore, to supplement this general review of the anthropology of development and the European Union with an outline of the theoretical *context* of the present analysis, in terms of the work of the anthropologists of Ireland who came before me, and to which I am ultimately indebted. This, then, will be the primary focus for the remainder of this introductory chapter.

IV. The Anthropology of Ireland.

The following sections will be focused initially around an examination of some of the key texts which have advanced anthropological knowledge during this century, in the context of the influence they have on the direction of more recent themes in Irish anthropology, with a view to tentatively assessing the ways in which they inform the reality of contemporary social life in Ireland as a whole.

IV.1. Traditional Formulations: Arensberg and Kimball and Beyond.

Whilst anthropological research in Ireland began as early as 1893, with the publication of Haddon and Brown's ethnography of the Aran Islands²², most authors accept that modern scholarship was initiated in the 1940s, when the American scholars Conrad Arensberg and Sol Kimball published their account

²² It is of perhaps crucial significance in terms of the later direction of the discipline that Haddon was one of the leading members of the famous expedition to the Torres Straits Islands, which also included Rivers, Seligman and Spencer. In this way, western Ireland was established as a valid locus for ethnographic enquiry during the very earliest years of the discipline's academic germination in Britain, prior to Rivers' work on the Todas in India, Radcliffe-Brown's problematic examination of Aboriginal kinship structures, and nearly thirty years before Malinowski published *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. It may be argued that the early designation of western Ireland as a "primitive" society had a lasting impact upon the development of the anthropology of Ireland, the legacy of which is still being felt in the academy.

of *Family and Community in Ireland*. This highly influential study of “peasant” society in County Clare remains one of the best exemplars of functionalist ethnography: highly Durkheimian in character, a theoretical framework is utilised in which the past and the future are suppressed in favour of the bounded, unchanging present and explanation for all the minutiae of social life and behaviour is prioritised and constantly sought. The text is organised according to the best traditions of inter-war anthropological scholarship, the chapter-headings themselves revealing a rigid adherence to the dominant paradigm of the time.²³ Throughout the book, certain “unusual” (or “exotic”) aspects of rural society- such as the stem family system, matchmaking and virilocal marriage- are highlighted and commented upon in great detail as the authors attempt to endow the reader with an image of Ireland as a “distinctive and characteristic variant of western European civilisation” (1968[1940]: xxxi).²⁴

The general theoretical orientation established by Arensberg and Kimball and their model of the isolated community was accepted more or less uncritically by anthropologists subsequently. This served to concentrate research in the western, north western and south western areas of the country, where fieldworkers could still discover the “traditional” community which more or less conformed to the ideal documented by their predecessors, something which continued to hold long after the functionalist paradigm held by Arensberg and Kimball had been rejected by most anthropologists working in other areas of the world.²⁵ Few researchers were prepared to question the extent to which the authenticity of *Family and Community in Ireland* was distorted by the authors’ theoretical preoccupations.²⁶ Thus Mogeey (1947), McNabb (1964), Fox (1968), Cresswell (1969), Messenger (1969) and Leyton (1975), among others, all conducted studies documenting rural life in which analyses of kinship and marriage, social class, religion and traditional economic arrangements featured prominently.²⁷

²³ In the opinion of Desmond Bell (1981: 34), the ideological strength of the functionalist paradigm was reinforced in Ireland because of its role in providing academic legitimacy for de Valera’s nationalist philosophy, which emphasised the importance of the self-sufficient, rural community to Irish economic and cultural life. He argues that this serves as a partial explanation for the hegemonic position which Arensberg and Kimball’s work assumed during the 1940s and subsequently.

²⁴ This comment is reflected in Eugenia Shanklin’s repeated use of the term “eccentricities” to describe “everyday life” in Donegal, in a paper published four decades after Arensberg and Kimball’s work. Her unusual choice of word begs the response: eccentric in relation to what? The answer is perhaps found in the conclusion of the paper, in which the author attempts to draw parallels between the rôle of the Irish go-between (a mediator between farmers at cattle fairs) and that of the leopard skin chief, described by Evans-Pritchard in *The Nuer*, thus removing Irish society altogether from the ambit of “western European civilisation” (cf. Shanklin 1980).

²⁵ This is perhaps most readily illustrated by the fact that the second edition of *Family and Community in Ireland* was issued in a more or less unaltered form as late as 1968, almost three decades after its original publication.

Where scholars were unable to discover the (apparently) homeostatic, bounded and egalitarian rural community of pre-war west Clare, the tendency was to document the ways in which contemporary social patterns differed from those detailed by Arensberg and Kimball. A plethora of studies appeared during the 1970s focusing on such issues as the social invariability of rural Ireland, the effects of emigration, mental illness, alcoholism and changes in "traditional" kinship arrangements. (Examples include Aalen and Brody 1969, Hannan 1970, Messenger 1971, Brody 1973, Bufwack 1975, Gibbon and Curtin 1978 and Scheper-Hughes 1979). Kane et al notes that one research proposal submitted to a U.S. national agency in the mid-1980s was rejected on the grounds that it failed to take into account "the devitalisation" of the west of Ireland (1988: 99). Almost all studies carried out before 1980 were focused upon rurality, and until very recently, there has been little attempt to marry the work of anthropologists and the community-based studies which they generate to the concerns of practitioners in other disciplines. *Family and Community in Ireland* may be *The Nuer* of Irish anthropology, but it has taken far longer for the discipline in Ireland to free itself from its dominance.²⁸

In an analysis of various key ethnographies written during the post-war era, Peace (1989) argues that Irish anthropology has been guilty of a profound level of ethnocentrism. Echoing the views of Bell (1981) and Wilson (1985) he asserts that, in trying to discover the romantic, rural idyll described by Arensberg and Kimball (and failing), many ethnographers have been led towards the mistaken conclusion that rural Ireland is somehow experiencing a process of inexorable decline. The sub-titles of some of these ethnographies tend to bear out this view: *Change and Decline in the West of Ireland* (Brody);

²⁶ Two exceptions which stand out in this regard are Brody's ethnography of the pseudonymous Inishkillane, which is couched as a general critique of Arensberg and Kimball, and Gibbon's (1973) paper "Arensberg and Kimball Revisited". In the latter, the author asserts that

On every score- the family, the 'mutual aid' system, the economic and cultural stability of the system, and its politics- their account ranges from the inaccurate to the fictive (1973: 491).

This point has more recently been reiterated by McCullagh. In her words:

The picture [Arensberg and Kimball] presented...was more a product of their theoretical interest in functionalism than of their somewhat more recalcitrant empirical material (1991: 201).

²⁷ The "Stem Family Debate", conducted largely in the pages of the journal *Comparative Studies in Society and History* during the late 1970s and early 1980s, may also be viewed as part of this trend (see Gibbon and Curtin 1978; Fitzpatrick 1983; Gibbon and Curtin 1983; Varley 1983), as may Richard Breen's (1984) paper on Dowry Payments, which represents an attempt to apply Arensberg and Kimball's findings on the subject to data taken from a small village in modern-day county Kerry.

²⁸ Having said this, however, Curtin et al. (1993) have made the important point that the second edition of Arensberg and Kimball's monograph included a new section on the town of Ennis in County Clare, which has been all but ignored by the discipline until very recently. The fact that the editors of this volume felt it necessary to cite this fact perhaps goes some way towards corroborating the view expressed here concerning the dominance of this work. Indeed, it is notable that in the most recently published ethnography of Ireland, Salazar's (1996) account of communal farm work in eastern Galway, Arensberg and Kimball's ideas form one of the primary theoretical concerns.

The Life and Last Days of an Island Community (Aalen and Brody); *Sex and Repression in an Irish Folk Community* (Messenger)²⁹; *Mental Illness in Rural Ireland* (Scheper-Hughes); *A People of the Celtic Fringe* (Fox). The situation described by these ethnographers (or “necrographers”, as Peace wittily refers to them) is almost always posited in contrast with both the industrial “heartland” of “modern” Europe and “the past” which the community is leaving behind (both of which are viewed in a positive light). Peace is led to conclude, convincingly, that:

Whoever the cultural Other is precisely, he or she is unlikely to accept the time consuming demands of a social scientist whose apparent concern is with the moribund character of the society in which he or she actively resides. Lest this smack of overstatement, it should be emphasised that there is ready evidence of a backlash to the negative portrait of the Irish now firmly established in the anthropological literature. For example, one of Ireland’s most informed and widely-read commentators, Michael Viney (1983), has stridently and rightly complained about the anthropologist’s obsession with describing ‘the cultural death rattles of the peasants of Western Ireland’ (1989: 106).

Peace’s arguments are very convincing, as far as they go. However, he entirely ignores another major thrust of anthropological research in Ireland which has adopted as a starting point a recognition of the dynamic nature of social change and the importance of communication between the “centre” and the “periphery”. A number of authors over the past two decades have begun to address these issues, and examine different themes in Irish social life to those of their predecessors. The geographical coverage of research has been extended into urban centres, the eastern seaboard, border counties and the Midlands, and there has been a marked increase in interdisciplinary studies.

One of the most profitable areas of enquiry in this respect has focused upon political life in Ireland, where anthropologists have begun to fill the gaps in existing research and succeeded in establishing a certain intellectual niche for themselves by concentrating on localised political organisation in the context of its relationship with the national system.³⁰ In so doing, they have

²⁹ This is actually a research paper.

come to address issues (apparently) associated with the process of “development” and “modernisation” in Ireland, and examine the relative validity of associated theories regarding the linkages between social change and the rise of the nation-state.

A significant area of interest has surrounded the phenomena of brokerage, patronage and clientelism, noted by anthropologists working in other areas of Europe as characteristic of nations which have a highly-centralised political systems and where the state exercises only a limited degree of coercive force across its territory. (See, for example, Boissevain 1966,1974; Eisenstadt and Roniger 1980; Silverman 1965; Weingrod 1968; Wolf 1966). Although this has only become an important area of enquiry in Ireland since the late 1960s, it does in fact claim a genuine intellectual kinship with the community study of the past. A number of ethnographers and ethno-historians, subscribing largely to a transactionalist paradigm, have documented the way in which the traditional form of patronage, deriving from the powerful role of the feudal landowner and largely economic in nature, was replaced by other forms of patron-client ties as new economic roles emerged during the post-famine era.

Perhaps the most important of these new economic figures was the “Gombeenman”, a credit broker and moneylender who first rose to prominence in the latter half of the nineteenth-century. Gibbon and Higgins (1974) have provided a comprehensive account of the ways in which this individual was able to develop an often pre-eminent position of authority in the rural communities of the western seaboard during the first three decades of this century, largely by establishing relations of political patronage built upon an ability to exploit the sense of isolation felt in such areas during the pre-independence period and their existing economic strength. Gombeenmen thus occupied important nodes in the political system, providing information for local people and interpreting state legislation as well as acting as representatives to agents of the national party.³¹ In the authors’ words, they adopted the role of “local representatives of nationalism” (ibid.: 34) in the nascent Irish state, and, in this way, added an ideological dimension to their

³⁰ In this, Irish anthropologists have heeded the view of Wolf, who stated as long ago as 1966 that:

The anthropologist has a professional licence to study such interstitial, supplementary and parallel structures in complex society, and to expose their relation to the major strategic, over-arching institutions (1966: 2).

³¹ Until 1932, when Fianna Fáil won its first national election, Cumann na nGaeghael formed the dominant government party.

Whilst the economic role of the gombeenman has changed significantly in recent years, Gibbon and Higgins suggest their importance as political *brokers* has remained strong in most rural areas of the Republic. The distinction between patronage and brokerage, although subtle, is strongly emphasised in their paper. The former describes an unequal dyadic relationship existing between individuals who occupy differing positions in a hierarchical system of societal organisation, where the subordination of the client to his patron is achieved through the latter's control of the nature and terms of exchange through a monopolisation of essential resources, be they material or ideological or both. Brokerage, on the other hand, involves a more complex arrangement whereby the goods, services and information supplied by the patron to his client is mediated through a "middleman" operating to maximise his own interests at the hands of both parties. The locus of control of resources is therefore crucial. An equally important characteristic of brokerage is that it is viewed as being an essentially voluntary relationship, (as opposed to patronage which involves compulsory ties of mutual exchange due to the monopolisation of essential resources by the patron), and is widely associated with political activity, particularly the linkages which exist between the individual and the state.³³

Following on from this, Gibbon and Higgins further propose that within the transactionalist literature itself, two definite theoretical positions can be discerned, ultimately relating to a differing conception of the way in which "complex" societies are organised. The first, which they label "strong transactionalism", is grounded in a largely ahistorical analytical framework, and holds that patronage and brokerage are prevalent in all societies regardless of the level of bureaucratic organisation, legal regulation, centralisation and so forth. The second is represented by a "weaker" version, where the phenomena are viewed as products of particular historical circumstances which give rise to their relative prevalence: in other words, the structural make-up of a society may be utilised to predict the significance of patronage and brokerage in the organisation of social and economic relations. In this

³² Interestingly, the occupation of most gombeenmen, as shopkeepers, tends to contradict the assertion that Brody makes in the final chapter of his book, namely that the increasing importance of this role was most representative of the influx of capitalism into Irish rural life, since the zenith of their influence had been reached almost fifty years before Brody carried out his fieldwork.

³³ This system has been described by Conway (1989: 236) as "parish pump" politics.

formulation, it is argued that the process of “modernisation” will generally lead to a gradual eradication of patronage in favour of brokerage, followed ultimately by the mobilisation of horizontal political ties. A case-study from the authors’ own fieldwork in County Wicklow is used to assess the validity of these two approaches. According to the weak transactionalist thesis, relations of patronage in Ireland would be expected to be far less prevalent than they were in the past, given the “modernisation” of the country since the establishment of the Irish state and its associated bureaucratic apparatus. However, it appears that in County Wicklow at least, whilst brokerage has indeed increased, an associated growth in what the authors term the “commodity economy” (ibid.: 40) has actually generated new forms of patron-client ties based upon the credit-retailing sector, which cannot be viewed as “survivals” from a previous era. Furthermore, the increase in brokerage has actually led to a decline in the significance of each transaction carried out by those occupying a favourable economic position:

The overwhelming majority of broker-client deals are quite trivial in content, and often constitute no more than personalised forms of obtaining normal legal requirements (ibid.: 41).

The authors account for this observation with reference to the fact that the actual number of gombeenmen operating in Co. Wicklow since independence has risen markedly, and during this century, they have been forced into increasing competition with one another in order to create and maintain their clientele. In these circumstances, gombeenmen have turned to politics as an alternative means of establishing a constituency of factional dependants, and have therefore adopted a dual role as patrons *and* brokers.

A similar situation has been documented by Wilson (1990), in an analysis of political change during this century in County Meath. He draws on historical data to demonstrate the principal factors which gave rise to a shift from political patronage to brokerage, citing specific events in the development of the Irish state in order to interpret and contextualise localised changes in political behaviour. It seems that the decade between 1932 and 1942, delineated by the beginning of the “Economic War” with England (1932-38) and the passing of the County Management Act (1942), was particularly crucial in the development of political brokerage in Meath. Prior to this time, the

political landscape in the county had been characterised by the domination of the farm-owning classes and the weakness of central government, the latter due in large part to the decentralised structure of the dominant party, Cumann na nGaeldehal, and the lack of an effective opposition. Election to the council was made on the basis of patronage: “who would best represent the constituents of their CEAs [political units] as patrons” (ibid.: 170). The Economic War was precipitated by the refusal of the government to pay land annuities to Britain, which resulted in the imposition of sanctions on Irish agricultural exports and consequent devastation of Irish agriculture. This acted as a catalyst for party-political mobilisation (centred around the new parties of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael) which came to a head in the 1934 local government elections and gave rise to the birth of *party political* patronage.³⁴ Fianna Fáil won the election in Meath, and dominated local politics for the following forty years, in parallel with their national successes. During the 1930s, the county council was largely controlled by one man, based in the county town, Navan, who “allegedly ran the committee system of the county council to his advantage ten years after his election and was the party leader in the council for a generation” (ibid.: 177), taking prime advantage of the power local councils were then able to exert in Ireland.

However, by the start of the 1940s, responsibility for many key services were being transferred into the hands of local government administrators or government departments in Dublin, a trend which cumulated in the passing of the County Management Act in 1942. This established a system whereby the control of certain council functions were given over to a county manager who was appointed by the Local Appointees Commission in the capital, thus removing the distribution of scarce resources from the control of politicians and “forcing local politicians into the role they have become so famous for in modern Ireland, that of brokers of information” (ibid.: 178).

To argue that, with the loss of the economic functions of local government, brokerage is no longer important in Meath would be mistaken, however. In a further study of political life in the county, Wilson has examined the role of the council chairman, a figure whom he describes as acting as an “institutional broker” (1989: 266) for local councillors. This is organised through his links with the County Manager and the local press, whom he

³⁴ Wilson’s analysis here, as he himself acknowledges (ibid.: 161), belies the traditional view of the origins of local support for the two parties in the Republic, that it came about as a result of loyalties founded at the end of the Civil War with the split of Sinn Féin in 1921.

utilises to gain information and promote the electoral image of himself and his colleagues. The way in which politicians are portrayed by the local media is now seen as all important- Wilson argues that certain councillors view this as being even more important than their constituency duties- and it seems that this is very much the chairman's responsibility.

Wilson suggests that the situation which existed in Meath for much of the post-war period, with the local council largely under the control of one family, is paralleled by evidence from Cork and Donegal, documented by Bax (1976) and Sacks (1976) respectively.³⁵ In these analyses, the system of brokerage is described as "machine politics", defined by Sacks as "organizations characterised by both their high degree of electoral control and their use of specific and material incentives" (1976: 9). It will be clear from the preceding discussion that the works of both Wilson and Gibbon and Higgins emphasise the way in which the centralisation of control of scarce resources has led to a rise of "*imaginary patronage*" (convincing local people that they are doing far more for them than they actually are), a product not only of the limitations of the politicians' role, but also their effectiveness in manipulating the flow of information between the local and national contexts (cf. Eipper 1986: 76). In the words of Wilson, for example, "getting the job done has become a matter of 'telling them the job is done'" (1990: 179).³⁶

From the data provided by Gibbon and Higgins and Wilson, along with other Irish political anthropologists such as Bax (1975a, 1975b, 1976) and Komito (1989, 1992, 1993), one can conclude that the influence of the nation-state in Ireland has given rise, not to a decline in patronage and brokerage, but a profound alteration in the ways in which the phenomena are manifested on a local level, previously-existing forms of petty-capitalist patronage providing the basis for contemporary systems of political brokerage. During the latter half of the nineteenth-century and the early twentieth-century, economic patronage was dominant: political patronage was exercised only in order to further the economic interests of the patron. Since this time, there

³⁵ The contemporary situation in Donegal will be addressed in detail in chapter seven.

³⁶ This observation has been echoed by Chubb, when he states that:

To the citizen, the councillor is a neighbourhood contact man whose duties are to render help with problems such as housing, planning permission or getting grants of one sort or another, and to secure a good share of new amenities for the district. What is more, citizens are in a position to impose this rule, as their votes are at issue here. (1992: 280).

has been a bifurcation and parallel transformation of the two forms, with new patterns of economic patronage emerging along with a marked increase in political brokerage related to personal electoral ambition rather than economic self-aggrandisement. In this way, Gibbon and Higgins argue that the “modernisation” thesis adopted by weak transactionalists inadequately describes the transition from feudalism to capitalism, since it envisages a unilineal progression between the two states which cannot account for the emergence of the types of dyadic relationship observed in Wicklow during this process. They conclude that the “modernisation” approach (perhaps most saliently represented by Brody’s study, *Inishkillane*) may be viewed as a product of the persistence of a certain evolutionary conception of society within anthropology, which can no longer explain the dynamic nature of change in modern Ireland.

Of course, it is not only through political ties that local communities are articulated into national networks of communication and social interaction. Economic activities operating outside the political arena are also of crucial significance, not least in Ireland, where the government has been pursuing a policy since the late 1970s of encouraging the decentralisation of industry away from previously-designated centres of growth. The country has had marked success in attracting transnational corporate investment, and there are now various well-established agencies such as the Industrial Development Authority and *Údarás na Gaeltachta* whose remit principally revolves around encouraging foreign industry to locate in Ireland. A number of anthropologists have documented the effects which inward investment has had upon small communities, and the ways in which indigenous populations are drawn into wider economic networks through this process.

One such analysis has been provided by Eipper, in an ambitious, quasi-Marxist ethnography documenting the impact of the construction of an oil terminal in Bantry Bay, county Cork in 1966, which was operational until 1979 (Eipper 1986). Eipper goes far beyond most other ethnographers of Ireland, in establishing a theoretical framework within which he not only attempts to demonstrate the various linkages between local and national political and socioeconomic activity, but explicitly brings into question the reasons why ethnographic analysis should be couched in terms of an opposition between the two sectors of activity at all, arguing that “micro-scale analyses are only

macro analyses on a small scale" (ibid.: 3). The main thrust of his argument centres around his observation that the "ruling trinity" in Ireland, comprising the Church, the State and Business, is reproduced, in a more or less intact form, in local contexts, and that the interplay between these three spheres of activity is reinforced not only through the substantial overlapping of their respective ideological agendas, but also by forces operating externally to them all.

This praxis works most convincingly with reference to the immediate and tangible effects of the investment made by Gulf Oil, the transnational company which operated the terminal, since approximately one-quarter of the town's entire workforce became dependent upon the development. Local business people altered their modes of operation to suit the designs of the corporation, subordinating themselves to its control (ibid.: 56-7), and, in this way, were able to augment their own power and prestige (as well as level of income) in relation to other occupational sectors. Local business interests had traditionally dominated the town's ruling bloc, and had a virtual monopoly in the control of community affairs, something which, despite changes in personnel, was enhanced with the arrival of Gulf Oil (ibid.: 127-146). Eipper identifies three key sectors of activity which together represented the major areas of power control in the town: the charity, the government and the development spheres, all of which were dominated by the local owners of capital (chapters 6 and 7). Furthermore, there emerged a new industrial proletariat (ibid.: 203), directly stemming from the enhanced economic opportunities provided by the terminal and shaped with little reference to national forces of class-formation.

Class relations in the area took on a new complexion when they became directly tied to and dependent on international capital, i.e. when they became confronted by a form of class power independent of local or national constraints (ibid.: 57).

One practical manifestation of this, Eipper argues, was the establishment of a militant trade union which adopted, as its organisational model, the ideology of British trade-unionism. Another was the adoption of a mediatory role by the indigenous bourgeoisie, who began to operate as financial and ideological "couriers" between transnational corporations and the population: in essence, therefore, the activities of the state itself began to resemble a form of political

brokerage (an observation which the author views as being a characteristic feature of international direct investment in Ireland during the modern era). This represents an important extension of the work of Irish political anthropologists discussed earlier, since it suggests that, whilst new forms of socioeconomic and class-based relations emerge during periods of localised economic growth, often the *structure* which such forms take resembles those which had existed previously (or, indeed, are still present). This leads Eipper to the conclusion that the power vested in the three sectors which together constitute the ruling bloc in Ireland will actually be reinforced by external development.

V. Outline of Chapters.

The purpose of this introductory chapter has been to locate this study within wider theoretical developments in anthropology and beyond. The analysis presented below represents an attempt to further the understanding of the practical dimensions of EU-sponsored development, and to thereby extend the scope of Irish anthropological scholarship. The theoretical context outlined above has been informed solely by the data which I collected during the time I spent in Donegal, and over the coming pages I hope to convince the reader of its relevance to understanding the relationship between development activity and social life in contemporary Ireland.

This study will seek to interrogate the following, broadly related, issues and themes:

- (i) The historical basis for the contemporary paradigm governing local development activity in both Donegal and in the Republic of Ireland.
- (ii) A comparison of the ideologies and models of development held by local voluntary groups, members of Donegal County Council and development professionals.
- (iii) The importance of discourse in shaping the contemporary structure of local development activity in Donegal.
- (iv) The significance of local social organisation in articulating the relationship between voluntary groups and wider structures and influences.
- (v) The implication of Ireland's membership of the EU in altering the traditional modes of interaction between local people and the state.
- (vi) The practical interpretation of the EU's ideals of "subsidiarity",

“partnership” and “empowerment” in the locale.

(vii) The role of the local political establishment in the development process, and the influence that the creation of an EU-sponsored administrative tier has had upon this.

(viii) Competitive claims to “community representation” on behalf of the various groups involved in the development process, and associated implications for the nature of governance in Ireland.

(ix) The relevance of anthropological analysis for policy prescription.

(x) The extent to which the fragmentation of development activity in Ireland can be explained with reference to social factors, which represents the overall aim of this study.

Chapter two introduces Donegal as a place, concentrating on some of the historical events which have given rise to contemporary patterns of social organisation, and the county’s status as an (apparently) “peripheral” and border region of the Republic of Ireland. Chapter three is concerned with an overview of local development in Ireland, focusing specifically upon the various programmes which have been instituted since the late 1980s, and an exploration of the main issues which have emerged from EU-sponsored development in the country to date.

The principal empirical data upon which this study is based are presented over the course of the next four chapters, in which the three “development communities” in Donegal are introduced and their role in the development process explored in detail. Chapter four builds upon the themes highlighted in chapter three, arguing that those involved in development in a professional capacity in the county may be regarded as belonging to a distinctive social group, with their own boundary markers, criteria for inclusion and exclusion, rules of behaviour and modes of operating. The uses to which the distinctive discourse of EU development planning are put by the professional sector are deconstructed and highlighted, and we suggest ways in which the professed aims of EU grant-aid differs from the reality of targeted spending in many cases. The focus of the following chapter is on the voluntary/community sector. A series of case-studies is employed to illustrate the social context of local development activity, which serve to emphasise the way in which development activity can operate as a prism through which to view various themes associated with social life in modern Ireland.

The chapter concludes with an extended analysis of the relevance of the data for the understanding of both social organisation in eastern Donegal, and the experience and role of community groups in the development process. Chapter six draws the previous two chapters together by concentrating upon the interaction between the development officers of EU programmes and local community groups in three areas of the county, again utilising a case-study approach. Chapter seven is concerned with political life in the county, focusing specifically upon the model of development associated with elected representatives in Donegal, and the responses of county councillors to the proliferation of publicly-funded development agencies now operating in the county.

The final chapter is intended to bind some of the disparate themes of the study together. In chapter eight, a number of conclusions are presented which suggests the primary ways in which the foregoing analysis advances current understanding in the academy, particularly in the fields of the anthropology of development activity, the anthropology of Ireland, and the anthropology of the European Union. The implications of the study for policy prescription are also outlined, in the context of new responses to the organisation of EU-funded development in Ireland (with an emphasis upon the current project aimed at reforming local government), and the end of the current round of the Structural Funds in 1999.

Chapter Two.

Donegal. A Sense of Place.

I. Introduction.

“Donegal calls you. It is a county of delights, and its chief glory is diversity”.

So wrote the Irish travel writer Harry Percival Swan in the preface to his book *Highlights of the Donegal Highlands*, published in 1955, a book which reflected- and anticipated- a long tradition of romanticised and lyrical description concerning the natural beauty of the Republic of Ireland’s most northerly county. Within any contemporary travel guide or tourist brochure, similar eulogies can be found, complementing picture postcard images of the deserted golden sands of Fanad, the rugged seacliffs around Donegal Bay or the whitewashed thatched cottages which dot the rural landscape.

From a purely geological perspective, Donegal is certainly one of the most diverse counties in the Republic, the vast igneous mountain ranges of the Bluestacks and Derryveagh in the hinterland contrasting sharply with the rolling drumlinoid landscape and fertile plains located around the Foyle and Swilly estuaries. The topography serves physically to divide the eastern and western halves of the county, and the fractal-like coastline, with its myriad of bays, inlets and peninsulas, is, at 1031 km, by far the longest in Ireland. Swan’s observation also applies on a number of other less obvious levels, however, surrounding, for example, the contrasts between urban and rural life, the differing religious traditions represented in the county, the cultural life of the Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking) and Galltacht (non Irish-speaking) areas and the influence of social class differentials. Indeed, the extent of the variation observable within Donegal is such that it is doubtful as to whether it can be usefully regarded as a single, unitary category for the purposes of analysis. Inishowen, with a population roughly equal to those of counties Carlow and Leitrim, is regarded by the people of Donegal as a “county within a county” and is more readily accessible from Derry than other parts of Donegal.¹ The similar remoteness of the Fanad peninsula has led to the evolution of a Gaelic dialect among native speakers living in the district which apparently differs considerably from that spoken in the

“official” Gaeltacht region, beginning a few miles across Mulroy Bay to the west. In addition, the two inhabited islands of Arranmore and Tory, with their own particular histories, cultural traditions and problems of accessibility, represent a further constituent element in Donegal’s “rich diversity”.

Previous ethnographic studies of Donegal have been sited in specific and well-defined areas of the county. There have been two analyses of life on the islands, Aalen and Brody’s study of the now-uninhabited Gola (*Gola: the Life and Last Days of an Island Community*) and Robin Fox’s famous study of *The Tory Islanders*. Eugenia Shanklin’s examination of agricultural practices among extensive farmers, *Donegal’s Changing Traditions*, was based upon fieldwork conducted in an area of south west Donegal, although the precise location is disguised. The unpublished account of development strategies in the Slieve League peninsula by anthropologist Vincent Tucker, written for his PhD thesis, along with Lawrence Taylor’s masterful dissertation on the anthropology of Catholicism (*Occasions of Faith*) were both based upon ethnographic data collected in the far south western coastal strip, in the parish of Glencolumbkille. Finally, Eileen Kane’s four-volume treatise on rural industry in the Gaeltacht areas of Ireland, whilst not an ethnographic text as such, includes a substantial section on the Donegal Gaeltacht around Gweedore. The most notable study written by scholars working in other disciplines is the analysis of *The Donegal Mafia* by the political scientist Paul Sacks, in which the research area was defined with reference to the boundaries of the Donegal North East parliamentary constituency.

The current study has followed this general trend. The primary focus here is upon the eastern half of the county, with the exception of the Fanad peninsula, corresponding to an area delimited by the border in the east and the edge of the Gaeltacht in the west, the coastline in the north and Donegal Town in the south. Although this may appear to describe a fairly precise geographical

¹ Indeed, Inishowen lay outside the boundaries of the ancient Gaelic kingdom of Tyrconnell (variations include Tirconnel, Tirconnail and Tír Chonail), which was roughly coextensive with the rest of the present-day Donegal. Although the peninsula was incorporated into the new county when it was created by the English administration in 1585, in many ways Inishowen has remained a separate entity. This is reflected in contemporary ecclesiastical boundaries, by which Inishowen is in the diocese of Derry and the remainder of the county in the diocese of Raphoe. As D. Mac Giolla Easpaig points out:

Despite their geographical link...,the two regions have follow disparate political paths for most of their history, with Inishowen looking southwards and eastwards to Tyrone and Derry rather than westwards towards Tír Chonail (1995: 149-150).

The purchase of newspapers illustrates this observation well: the weekly Donegal newspapers based in the county town, Letterkenny, sell few copies in Inishowen, where the Derry press holds sway. (Interview with Chris Ashmore, senior reporter on the *Donegal Democrat*, 12.3.97.). And as we shall see in chapter four, this separateness has also influenced the way EU-sponsored development activity is organised in the county.

area, a number of references will be made in the forthcoming chapters to localities which lie outside its boundaries, and it should therefore be viewed as more of a general guide to the research location rather than as a rigid spatial framework. However, there are a number of important theoretical and methodological considerations which influenced the decision to base the research in this region. Firstly, the analysis seeks to complete the ethnographic coverage of Donegal, if not in terms of the field of inquiry then at least geographically. Secondly, the area corresponds to the area of jurisdiction covered by two of the four companies responsible for the administration of the EU's LEADER II programme in Donegal, namely the Donegal Local Development Company and Inishowen Rural Development Ltd., both of which are of sovereign interest as far as the subject matter of this study is concerned. Allied to this, the region also contains the highest concentration of local development groups in the county. Thirdly, the influence of the border on development in Ireland, particularly in relation to the EU's active promotion of cross-border co-operation, remains a neglected area of scholarship and one most readily examined in this frontier zone. Fourthly, in view of the paucity of studies of urban life in Ireland, the fact that the area contains the largest town in the county, Letterkenny (which is also the headquarters of most of the grant-aiding companies operating in Donegal at the present time), was also a major influence upon the choice of research location. And finally, the particular methodological techniques employed during the fieldwork, surrounding participant observation conducted with a number of development groups, complemented by data derived from extended interviews, precluded a more widely-ranging geographical analysis.

Despite this narrowing of focus, it remains extremely difficult to know where to begin in portraying a particular place. In adopting an historical perspective, for example, how does one decide which particular period to use as a baseline? In describing the geography of a region, what level of detail should one choose to include? To a certain extent, these problematic issues have an enhanced relevance in the case of Donegal, a county which may be regarded as a confluence of the various traditions, influences and social patterns that together have been responsible for shaping the contemporary situation prevailing on the island of Ireland in the present day.² Moreover, it is the one region in which the two principal themes which have informed the

² As Taylor has noted: "In this division between east and west- and in other respects as well- Donegal is a microcosm of the whole island" (1995: 6).

direction of anthropological study in the island during the course of the century, namely rural life in the west and politico-religious traditions in the north, converge, containing the largest number of Irish language speakers and largest percentage of Protestants of any county in the Republic.

Most other academic studies of Donegal have introduced the county by choosing to emphasise “remoteness” as its primary defining characteristic. The first chapter of Paul Sacks’ book, for example, is entitled “Party Machines and Politics at the Periphery”, in which the author describes Donegal as part of one of the “most backward regions of Europe” (ibid.: 2). Shanklin, similarly, opens her account by stating that “To understand the position of Donegal, it is necessary to understand that it is remote- geographically, physically and economically” (ibid.: 3). Taylor argues that the western coastal area of county Donegal is “to some extent still peripheral to the heartland of capitalist development in western Europe” (1980: 64-5).³ Given the subject-matter of the present study, understanding the nature of the “peripherality” of the county has an enhanced relevance, since it is inextricably related to the complex array of motivational impetuses fuelling development activity. However, whilst it is indisputable that the county is remote from Dublin (although Letterkenny is actually nearer to Dublin than Cork), the category of “being remote” has rarely been explored in any great detail in previous studies of Donegal.⁴ Indeed, it may be regarded, from a geographical perspective, to be somewhat of a misnomer in light of the fact that a substantial proportion of the county’s inhabitants live within one hour’s drive or bus journey away from Derry, located just over the border. As Northern Ireland’s second city with a population of over 100,000, it would be difficult to portray Derry as being “peripheral” or “remote”, whatever criteria are being employed in the process of classification. In any ethnographic study, it is crucial to prioritise the perceptions of those under scrutiny, rather than to accept uncritically that “it is because it is”. In this respect, in describing Donegal as

³ Taking this argument to the extreme, it may be suggested that if Northern Ireland is “a periphery of a periphery” (Anderson and Shuttleworth 1992: 19), then Donegal is a periphery of a periphery of a periphery!

⁴ An interesting exploration of the possible negative implications of such a categorisation has been provided by Pain, in relation to Bhutan. The author argues that much of the policy framework underlying development actions in the country is organised around a particular conception of the country’s mountainous terrain. In his words,

the conceptual framework of policy has emphasised only the negative connotations of the descriptive language- for ‘mountainous’, read ‘isolation’ and ‘inaccessibility’- to the exclusion of possible positive ones. Because of this, policy has tended either to labour under these as intractable constraints or sought to mitigate them through various policy interventions (1996: 63).

In stating, perceptively, that “language and its interpretation has influenced policy formation and its prescription” (ibid.: 63), he also anticipates one of the central concerns of this study.

“peripheral”, it should be made absolutely clear who is labelling the county as such. As E. Estyn Evans pointed out in his seminal work, *The Personality of Ireland*, the dangers of ignoring this are manifest: “Looked at with English eyes, Ireland is the end of the world, but for those Irishmen whose eyes are glazed with the glory of Celtic Christianity it is the centre of Atlantic Europe” (1992: 20), something he illustrates with reference to a map of the British Isles and northern France turned anticlockwise through 180 degrees.⁵

Authors working within other disciplinary frameworks have often been guilty of positing an automatic relationship between the assumed “level” of peripherality of a region or country, and observable social and economic conditions prevalent within them. Rokkan and Urwin, for example, in classifying the countries of Europe as “core”, “interface peripheral” and “external peripheral areas”, describe the latter group (within which they include, somewhat bizarrely, the Republic of Ireland and islands of the U.K. and Greece) in the following terms:

[The periphery] is often a conquered territory, as it were a kind of colony, administered by officials who are responsive less to the desires of the periphery than to instructions from the centre. It will also have a poorly developed economy...Finally, the periphery will also tend to have a marginal culture: without unified and distinctive cultures of its own, its culture will be fragmented and parochial (1983: 2).

What is lacking from such studies is any apparent recognition that the concept of periphery is, above all, a social construction. In this chapter, then, it will be argued that peripherality is as much a state of mind as a physical fact, and owes more to historical, economic and political circumstances than to geography per se.

II. Donegal as Periphery.

The most frequent question asked of me during the time I was living in the county was “why Donegal?” Although I quickly became very adept at answering this, citing the large number of EU programmes operating in the

⁵ By way of contrast, Jacobsen, in describing the Republic’s economic marginality in relation to Britain, characterises the country as “the island behind an island” (1994: 53).

county, the presence of the border and its accessibility to Belfast, where my external supervisor was based, and adding with a flourish that it is, in my opinion, the most naturally beautiful of Irish counties, I usually had the impression that people still could not really believe that these were sufficient reasons to base myself there for a year. The fact that I have no family connections in the county, or indeed, in Ireland generally, was regarded by many people as remarkable, and I often felt that my informants⁶ assumed that there was some other reason why I had chosen Donegal that I was not willing to divulge. This was confirmed to me on a number of occasions when the initial question would be followed up by a further enquiry along the lines of “you wouldn’t have a lassie here then?”⁷

The genuine interest which people displayed in discovering my motivations for coming to Donegal was at once both disconcerting and flattering. Disconcerting, because it served immediately to alter- indeed, reverse- the status of the anthropologist and informant/interviewer and interviewee; and flattering, because it demonstrated a desire to develop a personal relationship as opposed to a purely formal, academic one. More importantly, it also provided me with an (albeit incomplete) insight into how a sense of place is constructed and negotiated. At first, I assumed that their curiosity was borne out of the relative absence of academic researchers in Donegal. As time went on, however, I came to realise that it also stemmed from the way in which the residents of Donegal perceive their own county.

Early in the fieldwork period, I began to record the language people used in characterising Donegal, language in which terms and phrases such as “cut off”, “out of the way”, “isolated” or “forgotten about” were frequently employed. The fact that these descriptors would often be accompanied by a statement about the people of Donegal themselves (“we’re not a bad people here, you wouldn’t find more friendly people in the whole of Ireland”)

⁶ The use of the word “informant” in ethnographic studies carries with it a welter of methodological significance, and I employ the term under protest. Where it appears in this study- and I have attempted to keep its use to a minimum- it should be read as being interchangeable in meaning with the subjects of this study, i.e. the people I met, interviewed, knew, and developed personal relations with during my time in Donegal.

⁷ As a side point, when my fieldwork period was coming to an end, in late November, I discovered that someone whom I knew very well in my home area had speculated during the first few weeks that I was living there that I was working for the British government and was attempting to infiltrate the IRA. Whilst this was the only occasion when “the troubles” directly impinged upon my field research, anthropologists working in other areas of Ulster have experienced severe difficulties in cases where informants have developed (obviously unfounded) suspicions that what they said was being reported to the security forces, which has sometimes forced researchers into hiding, or led to them leaving the province altogether. (See, for example, Jenkins 1984: 150). As Taylor, who has carried out research on Paramilitary groups in Belfast, perceptively notes: “On being asked ‘Are you a spy? How can you convince us you’re not a spy?’ there is nothing clinching that can be said” (1988: 137).

indicated that they were used not to in any way denigrate the county, but simply to convey what they saw as its peripheral status in relation to Ireland as a whole.⁸ Stories were often used to illustrate this, such as the one told to me by a journalist friend about the couple from Dublin who decided to visit Donegal on holiday and changed their money into Sterling at a bank in the capital before they left. Similarly, Ireland's "economic miracle", rarely out of the news during 1997, was regarded with a certain level of irony by most people among whom I lived in Donegal.⁹

This almost palpable sense of "being marginalised/cut off/out of the way" etc. provides the underlying spur for much of the development activity carried out in the county, and also represents the most obvious connection between its various representative forms. Donegal is one of Ireland's poorest counties, with persistently high levels of unemployment and emigration, a high age-dependency ratio, an over-reliance on agriculture, a weakly-diversified industrial base, an underdeveloped infrastructure and lower average incomes than the national norm. "Peripherality" is therefore a product of lived experience for many people in the county.

The difficulties of defining and measuring poverty are such that it is perhaps unwise to assume the existence of a direct, causal relationship between a set of statistical data and the incidence of deprivation¹⁰; however, certain indicators may reasonably be expected to be more significant contributory factors than others. Unemployment, for example, has been described as the single most important cause of poverty in Ireland (Nolan and Callen 1994: 97). In May 1997, the actual number of people unemployed in Donegal was the fourth highest of any county or county borough in the state, exceeded only by figures recorded for the three principal urban centres of Dublin, Cork and Galway¹¹, and an unemployment rate exceeding 20% has been recorded for every year since 1981 (peaking at 27.1% in 1987).¹² In July 1998, it was 22.8% compared to an unemployment rate nationally of 10.4%.

⁸ This tendency tends to contradict Ardener's view that the classification of places as "being remote" is an exercise conducted exclusively by outsiders, and reflects a "perception from the dominant zone" (1989: 223).

⁹ Politicians appear to be especially cynical about the existence of the "Celtic Tiger". In the words of a Press Release distributed by the Independent Fianna Fáil Party prior to the general election in June 1997: "The Celtic Tiger means nothing to Donegal and its promotion by the Government is only a myth as far as this county is concerned". As one businessman put it forcibly to me: "There's no fucking Tiger up here, I can tell you!".

¹⁰ For a lucid exploration of these difficulties, see Nolan and Callen (1994: 13-24).

¹¹ Central Statistical Office (1997).

¹² Donegal County Enterprise Board (1995).

Furthermore, there is a very high incidence of long-term unemployment: over 40% of those on the live register have been unemployed for more than three years.¹³ Donegal also has the largest number of people claiming Lone Parent's Allowance in rural Ireland, accounting for over 70% of the total number for the North West region generally (counties Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal).¹⁴ Income levels have been calculated to be approximately 85% of the national average, falling to 75% in the case of industrial wages, and less than 60% for those engaged in agriculture.¹⁵

With regards to Donegal's industrial base, over 2,500 people, representing almost one-third of the total workforce engaged in the manufacturing industrial sector in the county, are employed in the two Fruit of the Loom clothing-making plants in Buncrana and Milford. Investment by this American multinational in the region (which, together with a plant on the outskirts of Derry, totals over £75m) was initiated in 1987 when the corporation bought-out a textile factory in Buncrana owned by three brothers; its supreme significance to the economy of Donegal was highlighted during the summer of 1997 when two of the three brothers were ousted from the local board of management and overall control for the plants passed to the European headquarters in Switzerland. Coming in the wake of a decision to relocate most of the company's US manufacturing capacity to Mexico and the Caribbean, this move was greeted with what could be described as widespread panic in the county, and prompted the Tanaiste, Mary Harney, to fly to Chicago to meet with the corporation's directors. In the words of Jim McDaid, Fianna Fáil T.D. for Donegal North West, "If they treat their own US citizens in that fashion, what possible chance have the people in Donegal and Derry of taking them at their word?"¹⁶ At the time of writing, the future of Fruit of the Loom in Donegal remains uncertain, with a commitment given by the company to maintain current employment levels expiring at the end of 1998. Despite its importance, an over-reliance upon this type of operation has brought its own problems. The factories employ a large number of young women, many of whom are under 18, something which has served to depress the levels of educational achievement among females in certain parts of the

¹³ *ibid.*: 13.

¹⁴ Dept. of Social Welfare figures quoted in the *Tirconnail Tribune*, 7th. August 1997.

¹⁵ Donegal County Enterprise Board, *op. cit.*: 16, 48. (The figure given here for agriculture is an estimate, as the situation is complicated by direct payments from the EU and undeclared non-farm income).

¹⁶ Quoted in the *Irish Independent*, 16th. August 1998.

county in recent years.¹⁷ There is also concern that Fruit of the Loom has served to “crowd out” the development of indigenous industry in this sector.¹⁸

The economic marginalisation of Donegal is thus a principal element contributing to the “discourse of peripherality” prevalent in the county. Local responses to the county’s impoverishment, together with what is popularly viewed as the neglect of the county by successive governments over the course of this century, have given rise to what may usefully be described as an embedded “culture” of development activity and voluntary activism, something which forms a central theme of this study. However, in order to explain the “peripherality” of the county, it is impossible to ignore the existence of the border separating the Republic of Ireland from the U.K., and Donegal from the eight other counties of Ulster. Numerous studies of the frontier zone in both Northern Ireland and the Republic have emphasised the economic disadvantages faced by the residents of this area (e.g. O’Dowd 1994b: 35; O’Dowd and Corrigan 1994: 337-340; O’Dowd, Corrigan and Moore 1995; Logue and Kavanagh 1997). Along with the resulting six-mile neck of land connecting Donegal with county Leitrim and the Irish state, the border is perhaps the one over-riding phenomenon cultivating a sense of geographical isolation within the county.

The presence of an international boundary on the island of Ireland is a product of a set of historical events and processes which have their roots in the restructuring of Europe during the early modern period; it is therefore understandable only in terms of the history of the country, and particularly its relationship with its nearest neighbour and coloniser. Although Ireland was partitioned in the early 1920s, the factors which ultimately led to this event were set in train at least three hundred years before, with the creation of the Plantation of Ulster in the early years of the seventeenth century.¹⁹ Whilst it is not my intention to provide a comprehensive review of the various conditions which led to the colonisation of the province- good accounts can be found in Canny (1987, 1989), Brady and Gillespie (1986), Dickson

¹⁷ cf. Donegal County Enterprise Board, op. cit.: 18.

¹⁸ Interview with Forbairt chief executive, Donegal office, 12th. February 1997.

¹⁹ As Thornley has stated:

By 1641 only 500,000 of the 3,500,000 acres in the six planted counties remained in Catholic hands, and this proportion was further reduced as the century wore on...So developed the ethnic division that was to generate the ‘Ulster Question’ in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and ultimately, the political partition of the island. (1970: 9-10.)

(1987) and Moody et al (1976)- the structure of contemporary society and patterns of settlement in Donegal owe much to the first and most significant wave of British immigration and its aftermath; for this reason, it is necessary to outline briefly the influence of the Plantation for the conditioning of social and geographical processes in the county.

III. The Ulster Plantation in Donegal.

Although the period between 1610 and 1625 is usually recognised as the most significant in terms of the creation and impact of the plantation in Ulster, it represented only the first of successive waves of immigration into the province during the seventeenth century.²⁰ According to Robinson, however, the general demographic pattern established during these initial fifteen years, in which natives and settlers were geographically juxtaposed according to the relative topography of the land, has prevailed in a relatively uncorrupted form up to the present day (1984: 100; see also Ruane and Todd 1996: 25-6).²¹

In Donegal, this physical zoning of the population represents perhaps the most readily-identifiable contemporary legacy of the Plantation. The distribution of land under the Plantation scheme was organised on a baronial basis (the barony representing the primary sub-county administrative unit), with each category of settler²² allocated land according to a pre-determined classification of county division. Donegal was comprised of six baronies, namely Inishowen, Portlaugh, Lifford, Kilmacrennan (also known as the Doe and Fanad barony), Boylagh and Banagh²³, and Tirlough. The eastern baronies of Lifford and Portlaugh were granted to English and Scottish

²⁰ Scottish Presbyterians, for example, did not become a fully established population group in Ulster until the following century.

²¹ Obviously, it is extremely difficult to posit a dichotomy expressed in *absolute* terms between the categories of "settler" and "native" today. The four hundred years which have elapsed since the Plantation was first established have served to blur such a classification to the extent that it has only a relatively marginal utility for the purposes of describing the contemporary demographic make-up of Ulster. As Robinson has pointed out:

The concept of cultural purity has no more validity than that of ethnic purity. Certainly some areas contain populations drawn mostly from one or other of these sources [settler and native], but many perceptions of cultural differences are based on cultural identification rather than reality...Cultural fusion, the mutual adaption of traits, interdependent development and subsequent evolution have given rise to patterns of cultural phenomenon that are neither 'Irish' and 'Catholic' nor 'British' and 'Protestant' in type (1984: 194).

²² Three categories of settler (or "Planter")- those to whom land was to be distributed- were initially identified: influential English and Scottish landowners (known as "undertakers"), English Crown servants based in Ireland ("servitors"), and native Irish freeholders loyal to the King (Robinson 1994: 63; Canny 1989: 114-116). By far the most important for the future success of the scheme was the first group, since they were allocated land on the strict condition that, for every 1000 acre unit that they were granted, at least 24 people from British Protestant families would be settled upon it (Bardon 1992: 125). They were also required to construct defensible buildings on their holdings, and clear their land completely of Irish peasantry (Canny *ibid.*: 115).

undertakers respectively, with the latter also gaining the Boyleagh and Banagh barony in the west. The remaining baronies were assigned to servitors and the native Irish, the effect of which was to create a demographic pattern in which settlers and natives were concentrated in geographically discrete areas of the county (Hunter 1995: 286-287). The census of 1659, for example, revealed a marked concentration of British settlement- representing over 70% of the total settler population- around the “Laggan” area which surrounds the most southerly extent of the Foyle and Swilly estuaries²⁴, corresponding to the Lifford and Portlough baronies (Pender 1939: 148-149). This is a low-lying region characterised by an assemblage of undulating drumlins, and represents the primary area of arable land in the county. It also contains the highest concentration of those belonging to the two principal Protestant denominations represented in Donegal, Anglican (Church of Ireland) and Presbyterian, and those farming in the area today are almost all of Scottish or English descent.²⁵ In contrast, the mountainous zones to the west and north of the Laggan attracted relatively few colonists, with figures of less than 10% being recorded in 1659 for much of Inishowen and for the far westerly region roughly coterminous with the present-day Gaeltacht. It appears that Scottish settlement in the Boyleagh and Banagh barony was confined mainly to the southern coastal strip, with only 150 settlers of British origin being recorded for the entire barony in 1630 (Hunter 1995: 294). As Falls has explained:

The wilderness and inaccessibility of a great part of [Donegal] repelled the colonists, some of whom, after one terrified glance at their holdings, returned home incontinently, while others made no attempt to bring over English and Scottish tenants...The district was as Irish as it is today. (1996: 215-6).

Likewise, these are the areas which now contain the smallest proportion of those who would regard themselves as being of settler origin.²⁶ In this way, the impact of the Plantation in Donegal was felt primarily only in the area

²³ As an incidental point, “Banagh” was the name Shanklin chose as a pseudonym for her own research area.

²⁴ The precise location of the Laggan is uncertain. O’Dowd notes that in the nineteenth century, it was variously described as the region lying between Muckish mountain and the plains of Antrim, an area around the Finn Valley, the strip of land joining Letterkenny and Omagh, and a “triangle” delimited by the towns of Letterkenny, Lifford and Derry (1995: 632). O’Donnell refers to it as a “cultural area” (1995: 509). In this study it will denote the drumlinoid land lying between the southerly reaches of the Foyle and Swilly estuaries, which is how it is usually understood by people in Donegal today. (The term is sometimes spelt with a single “g”).

²⁵ Interview with P.J. Molloy, chief agricultural advisor, Teagasc Donegal, 6th. May 1997; M. Chance, personal communication. (See also Appendix Four).

adjacent to the border with the counties of Londonderry, Fermanagh and Tyrone.²⁷ The undertakers based in this eastern segment of the county, an area coextensive with the Lifford barony, were responsible for establishing various small “plantation villages”, such as Convoy, St. Johnston, Manorcunningham, Castlefinn, Ballybofey and Newtoncunningham, a number of which were later granted charters to hold weekly markets (Hunter 1995: 312-314). In addition, the town of Letterkenny was founded by an English undertaker called Sir George Malbury, who built forty houses around a pre-existing Irish settlement²⁸ during the 1620s, and Lifford itself similarly owes its origins to English colonists (Falls 1996: 216). The following table indicates the extent to which the population groups were geographically divided in seventeenth-century Donegal.²⁹

Townland/Village Name No. of English/Scots No. of Irish
[Contemporary Name]

St. Johnstowne [St. Johnston]	19	18
Drumcheen [Drumkeen]	0	13
Conavay [Convoy]	17	2
Rapho Town [Raphoe]	80	24
Castlefin [Castelfinn]	22	7

The significance of some of these figures for my own study will become clear in chapter five. For now, however, it will be enough to state that the Ulster Plantation left an indelible mark upon Donegal and upon the Province generally, which remains visible in the contemporary social landscape, and, indeed, was partially responsible for its creation. As well as establishing a pattern of demographic “zoning”, another principal effect of the Plantation

²⁶ One Rev. G.A. Lecky, writing in 1908, summed up the prevailing settlement pattern in the county:

It should be remembered that there are two Donegals- an outer and an inner. The former, which is almost wholly Roman Catholic, and from which the county to a large extent takes its character and complexion in the eye of the public, consists of extensive mountainous districts that lie along the western seaboard, and at some points run far inland. The latter consists of the more flat and fertile country that lies between the mountains and the river Foyle- the eastern boundary of the county. It is largely Protestant and from a very early period in history has been known as the Laggan, i.e. the low and level country. (Quoted in MacLaughlin 1995: 587-588).

²⁷ This is not to say, however, that the Plantation was not important in the social development of other areas of Donegal. Indeed, in establishing a system of absentee landownership throughout most areas of the county, it is probably difficult to overestimate its impact. As Taylor has pointed out,

...there had been Protestants within easy reach of every mountainy glen in the west of the county, and the more radically changing world to the east continually and dramatically affected even the most isolated corner (1995: 24).

²⁸ Letterkenny means “Hillside of the O’Canannains” in Irish (Maguire 1917[1995]: 1). The O’Canannains were a Gaelic clan prominent in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

²⁹ The data given here are derived from Pender, op. cit.: 149.

was to engender a very strong cultural link between certain areas of Donegal and Scotland, which was enhanced, from the early 1800s, through seasonal migrations of agricultural workers who travelled to the latter in search of work.³⁰ Together with the military defeat of Catholic armies from throughout Europe by Cromwellian forces in 1649, and by Williamite troops at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, it also gave rise to a protracted period of British (and therefore Protestant) hegemony in Ireland, which was broken only with the War of Independence (1919-1921) some three hundred years later. This led directly to the separation of the six counties of the north from the twenty-six of the south, the creation of the Northern Ireland and Irish Free states, and left a county in the north west geographically severed from the ambit of both. Thus Ulster was transformed, once again, in a few cataclysmic years, just as it had been in the early sixteen hundreds, the two events both representing nadirs in a process of change evolving over many centuries, the effects of which are still being felt in the province.

IV. Donegal as a Border Region.

The frontier between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic has been described as "the strangest border in Europe" (O'Dowd 1994: 34), a reference to the meandering and erratic course it takes in dividing the island of Ireland. In the context of the Maastricht Treaty and the "New Europe", this characterisation could be viewed as having an additional meaning: the relative lack of Irish cross-border co-operation, a continuing and highly-visible security presence and, above all, persistent tensions between Unionists, Nationalists and Republicans concerning the possibility of a future united Ireland may be viewed as being somewhat anachronistic in light of the rapid dismantling of international borders throughout much of mainland Europe which has occurred since the early 1990s. On both sides of the border, however, the EU is increasingly being viewed as an instrument capable of counterbalancing the "back-to-back" process of development which has been

³⁰ O'Dowd (1995) has provided a lucid account of the history of these seasonal migrations. She notes that competition between steamship companies operating on the routes from Derry and Belfast to Glasgow from the 1830s onwards enabled many more people to afford the cost of passage, and following the famine of the 1840s, there were huge increases in the numbers travelling to Scotland. By 1858, all the able-bodied men from the parishes of Gweedore and Cloghaneely in the west of the county migrated every spring, many not returning home until Christmas, and by the turn of the century, 80% of all Ulster migrants to Scotland were from Donegal. At its peak, up to 3000 "tattie hokers" (potato pickers) were leaving the county annually, their repatriated earnings accounting for a significant proportion of average incomes (almost 40% in the case of the Fanad peninsula in the 1890s). Although declining markedly after the 1930s, these seasonal movements were still being observed as late as the 1970s. The legacy of this link with Scotland remains in contemporary transport routes, with up to six buses per day travelling between Donegal and Glasgow. In the words of a Parish Priest from the east of the county, "to most people here, getting a bus to Glasgow is like popping down the road. But going to Dublin, now that would be different- you might as well ask them to go to the moon".

pursued by successive governments in London and Dublin since partition in 1921.

In physical terms, the 146 km-long border separating Donegal from the counties of Derry, Tyrone and Fermanagh is visible only where it is bisected by transport routes. There are no railway services in Donegal, and of the six recognised crossing points, just three of these could be described as major roads. The most northerly and- in terms of the volume of traffic- significant intersection is relatively innocuous in comparison to other border crossings in the county. The location at which the N11 trunk route becomes the A2, twenty-five miles east of Letterkenny, the border is marked only by a change in the road surface, a collection of abandoned buildings representing former police and Garda checkpoints, and two faded signs welcoming drivers to the "North West Atlantic and Lakelands", on the Donegal side, and the "City of Derry" for those travelling east. The only indication that one is actually passing between two sovereign countries is a sign on the Northern Ireland side requesting drivers to check that their insurance policy is valid for the U.K. Although a check-point manned by the Gardai, consisting of a chicane of road-cones, is occasionally established on weekdays during the evening rush-hour period, a permanent police presence was removed in February 1997. The Donegal-Tyrone border, bisected at the Foyle bridge between the towns of Lifford and Strabane, is more readily identifiable, denoted by the county's only custom post on the southern side of the bridge, and a large security installation on the northern side. All traffic must pass through a narrow steel stockade, bounded by four conning towers, and the tinted, bullet proof glass, together with cameras mounted at eye-level by the side of the road leaves one in no doubt of the existence of the border. A similar, but smaller structure, is located at the other major road crossing, at Belleek in the south of the county. Despite the presence of these imposing fabrications, most vehicles are allowed to pass freely through the border, and only rarely are drivers required to produce documentation.

The border represents far more than merely an international frontier, however. It is also a powerful symbol: of events and processes which led to its creation, of the various cultural identities of the people who live in the county, of the relationship between the locale and the state, of Donegal as a place. The political, economic and social history of the county during the twentieth

century has been moulded to a large extent by both the practical implications of partition and the ongoing adjustment to their effects; the existence of the border therefore has a dual reality for the people of Donegal, operating on both a psychological and an ontological level, and is thus a social construction as well as a political one. To label Donegal as a “border region” is to describe not only the diffuse influence of the border beyond the confines of its immediate hinterland, but also a particular socio-cultural typology, which is manifested through a dyadic processual relationship in which the boundary is as much a product of the collective imagination as a frontier separating two governmental systems.

The border is thus a key element in what might be termed the “psychological peripheralisation” of Donegal. Local development represents perhaps the most obvious manifestation of this phenomenon, allowing local people to develop responses to what they perceive as their marginalisation from the “mainstream” of the Irish economy and the concerns of the state. In the final section of this chapter, the historical evolution of community development will be outlined, with particular reference to one famous place located in the south of the county, Glencolumbkille.

V. Development In Donegal: an Historical Overview.

In considering the history of development in Donegal, it is important to discriminate, first of all, between state-sponsored schemes and those initiated at the local level.³¹ With regards to the former, the activities of the Congested District Board in the nineteenth century and the Gaeltacht development organisations (Údarás na Gaeltachta and Roínn na Gaeltachta) and Forfás (IDA Ireland and Forbairt³²) since the 1950s, as well as initiatives sponsored by government departments such as the Department of the Marine and the Department of Agriculture in more recent years, have all had an enormous influence upon development in the county. Most importantly, since Ireland’s accession in 1973, the EU has become the sovereign element in the development process, through the instruments of the Common Agricultural Policy and the Structural Funds. The specific characteristics of government and EU

³¹ The differences between state- and locally-initiated development programmes are often characterised as the “top-down” versus “bottom-up” approaches. (See, for example, Breathnach and Duffy 1983). However, it is important to remember that, while state-sponsored schemes have traditionally been of the former variety, the influence of the EU has introduced a significantly “bottom-up” flavour to state-sponsored development in Ireland.

³² In 1998, Forbairt was re-launched as “Enterprise Ireland”. It will be referred to by its former name throughout this study.

development projects operating in Donegal during the fieldwork period are outlined elsewhere in this analysis, however, and an evaluation of their impact in Donegal over a longer time-scale lies well beyond the scope of this study. So whilst development actions emanating from the locale will be the primary focus here, this is not in any way to devalue the importance of the state/EU. As I have stressed previously, development in Donegal (and, indeed, in Ireland generally) is characterised by an uneasy relationship between the state and the locale, and the primary motivation for local development actions often originates from a perceived indifference of government and politicians towards the county, one of the numerous manifestations of what I have identified as the psychological peripheralisation of Donegal.

The creation of the first formally-constituted structures aimed at the effectuation of local development in Ireland was initiated in the early years of this century, largely as a response to a decline in agricultural production and continuing high rates of rural depopulation, a legacy of the famine years of the 1840s and 1880s. Many of these bodies were organised as co-operatives, and- in terms of their professed aims and modes of operation- may be regarded as the precursors of the voluntary community groups which exist today. As early as 1917, one of the leaders of the co-operative movement in Ireland, Lionel Smith-Gordon, stated that their member organisations should be “a voluntary association of individuals, combining to achieve improvement in their social and economic condition, through the common ownership and democratic management of the institutions of wealth”³³, a definition which could be applied equally to many contemporary local groups.

Jonathan Bell (1983) has provided an account of the history of an agricultural co-operative society which operated in the small town of Creeslough in north Donegal between 1920 and 1979. The co-op was affiliated to the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (IAOS), a national body which had been established in 1894 by various leading members of the Irish ascendancy, including the poet A.E. Russell (one of the architects of the Celtic revivalist movement) and the Home Rule campaigner Horace Plunkett, in order to provide support for the growing number of co-operatives throughout the country. Bell notes that as early as 1906, there were 49 societies in county

³³ Quoted in Bell (1983: 193).

Donegal affiliated to the IAOS (ibid.: 197). Although the aims of the national organisation were ambiguous, one of its leaders stated that the movement should be viewed as being "half way between capitalism and socialism" (ibid.: 194).

North Donegal was connected to the IAOS through a prominent local landowner called Sir Hugh Law, a nationalist politician who was a member of the Westminster and later Free State parliaments, and who was a personal friend of A.E. Russell.³⁴ Together with his wife, he was responsible for the establishment of another agricultural co-operative, based in nearby Clondahorkey, and had also built a community centre for the residents of his home townland of Marblehill, which, at the time of Bell's fieldwork, was still standing. The Creeslough society was formed through a public meeting arranged by the regional IAOS convener in the district, at which twelve local volunteers were elected to an "ad hoc" committee and over 200 people bought shares in the new venture. A manager was appointed, and a shop was opened on the main street in the town to act as a retail outlet for agricultural produce bought from farmers in the district. During its initial period of operation, the co-op was largely unsuccessful commercially, due to the inexperience of the manager, a former railway porter, who was replaced in 1923. Bell quotes the opinions of the new manager when he took over the running of the society:

[It was] a terrible place with the committee split, and the shareholders split on politics. They hadn't paid landlords or anything- Creeslough was a bitter place....This section was for paying, the other section wasn't for paying (ibid.: 200).

A bank overdraft of £1000 had also "been squandered". Under his stewardship along with that of his successor, who took over in 1938, the co-op was transformed into a highly profitable venture, capturing up to seven-eighths of the town's retail trade by 1950s. Despite this, however, tensions developed between the committee and the paid staff of the society, which led eventually

³⁴ Russell himself had visited north Donegal in 1910, and wrote a pamphlet for the IAOS detailing his impressions of the area. He was struck by the resilience of the farming community, who were able to eke out a living in conditions where "the bare bones protrude through the starved skin of the earth". (Quoted in Bolger 1995: 650). As IAOS organiser for Connacht and Donegal, he also was responsible for the establishment of a number of "village banks" in the county, and later went on to edit the co-operative society's newspaper, *The Irish Homestead* (ibid.: 661). According to Aalen, who describes Russell as "a curious combination of mystic, poet and business organiser", his vision was to create a "co-operativist commonwealth" in Ireland which would eventually replace individualism and capitalism as the dominant mode of economic production (Aalen 1993: 159).

to the resignation of the manager in 1957. In the 1960s, the profitability of the business declined and the society was eventually bought out by the Tirconnail Co-operative, which operated in the east of the county.³⁵

The principal conclusion which Bell draws from his examination of the early history of this particular co-operative is that once the society had developed into a successful business, the voluntary management board, along with local people in general, ceased to display the same level of interest in the undertaking. Rather than representing an expression of the solidarity between the residents of the area, as it had been in the beginning, the society came to be viewed simply as another private venture. Whilst the number of shareholders rose sharply during the 1930s and 1940s, their involvement was motivated largely by economic self-interest, a desire to capitalise on the increasing dividends that the society was then distributing. As will be shown in later chapters, some of the important issues which affected the development of this particular society- surrounding local share ownership, the relationship between voluntary management boards and paid staff, linkages with a national organisation and the trade-off between communitarian ideals and the reality of business practice- display marked parallels with the experience of contemporary development groups in the Donegal of today. Moreover, the organisational model established by the early agricultural cooperatives and its relationship to the structure of contemporary development groups can be traced through another and more famous cooperative venture pursued in the south of the county, something to which this discussion will now turn.³⁶

The history of rural development in county Donegal and, indeed, in Ireland as a whole, is inextricably welded to the experience of Glencolumbkille, a small parish located at the western edge of the Slieve League Peninsula overlooking Donegal Bay. The Glencolumbkille Co-operative Society, which was formed in 1952, became a model for local community action in Ireland, and was widely reported on by the media in Ireland and throughout Europe, the U.S.A. and even Japan (O'Hanrahan 1982: 72). It was led by the curate and later priest of the parish, Fr. James McDyer, who had arrived in the area

³⁵ The Tirconnail Co-operative eventually became Donegal Creameries, an organisation which will be discussed further in relation to the Professional Development Sector. (See chapter four, section IV). The rationalisation of dairying co-operatives occurred throughout Ireland during the 1960s and early 1970s, due to competitive pressures from new shops and supermarkets, and encouraged by a government policy aimed at harnessing economies of scale in the sector (Bolger 1995: 671; Curtin and Varley 1989b).

³⁶ The following section is based largely on the accounts found in McDyer 1982; Breathnach and Regan 1981: 29-36; and Tucker 1989.

in 1951 following postings in London, Kent, Brighton and on Tory Island off the Donegal coast. A native of Donegal, McDyer was born in Kilraine, near Glenties, in 1910, and was educated at St. Eunan's College in Letterkenny and St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, where he trained for the priesthood. In his autobiography, he describes his first impressions of Glencolumbkille in the early 1950s:

I was conscious of all the debilitating effects of our emigration when I arrived in Glencolumbkille as curate. I had met the flower of our youth as emigrants in England and I knew that no country could ever cherish its citizens if it was unable to support them with employment. And here I saw it happening before my eyes, for Glencolumbkille was dying- and the killer disease was emigration. There was no industry apart from intermittent weaving; there was no hope of prosperity for those who worked the land. The vitality of the community was ebbing fast...The population was resolving itself into the old and the very young, and it was clear that before long we would only have the old.

A fierce resolve gripped my mind. Perhaps I was influenced by the doughty cliffs that surrounded me. Perhaps I was influenced by the traditional nationalism in which I was nurtured. But certainly I am sure that I was moved by the injustice that had been done to our people over the centuries (1982: 49).

This "fierce resolve" was to inspire McDyer for the next four decades, as he set about establishing a bewildering array of development projects in the area. These are summarised briefly below:

- (i) Social Projects: the building of a community hall and Gaelic Games field.
- (ii) Economic Projects: the establishment of a vegetable canning plant, knitting and home crafts co-operatives and a handcrafts centre.
- (iii) Tourism Projects: the building of a "folk village", a holiday village and the conversion of a local hotel.
- (iv) Agricultural Projects: the pooling of common land in the area, an intensive pig-rearing farm, a sheep-farming co-operative and a glasshouse project for vegetable production.

In addition to these schemes, McDyer also involved himself in lobbying activities, successfully persuading the ESB and the county council to accelerate the provision of electricity and the tarring of roads in the parish. In the early 1950s, McDyer initiated the "Glencolumbkille Agricultural and Industrial Show", utilising funds generated from the hiring out of the community hall to other groups, in order to promote the "traditional skills" of the people of the parish. In its first three years, 1953-1956, it was opened by Eammon de Valera and the American Ambassador to Ireland, and, in McDyer's words, "drew visitors from all other South West Donegal" (ibid.: 63).

Of all the projects that were undertaken, the communalisation of agricultural production was certainly the most significant, in terms of the level of outside interest that it generated; ironically, it was also one of the least successful. The scheme was intended to increase the viability of farming in the parish by consolidating the holdings of all small farms within its boundaries, which would then be worked communally. Of 130 farmers approached, 118 agreed to take part in the project. As well as leading to the creation of one of the largest farms in western Europe, covering over 15,000 acres, McDyer also hoped that the scheme would revitalise the tradition of "Meithal" in the district, which he believed had been eradicated by the commercialisation of agriculture (ibid.: 65-67; Breathnach and Regan 1981: 34). Various problems developed early in the life of the programme, however, as McDyer came into direct conflict with both the Land Commission, which regarded the scheme as "unchristian and communist" (quoted in Tucker 1989: 293), and various government departments. As McDyer states in his autobiography, "I did not reckon with the cold winds of bureaucracy which were to shrivel us before we commenced" (McDyer 1982: 66-67). The Department of Agriculture, for example, had agreed to advance an Agricultural Credit Corporation Loan to the G.C.S. on condition that the department's regional advisors became overall supervisors of the scheme, and that the title deeds for every participating farm were surrendered to the department to act as collateral for the loan. McDyer's refusal to concur with these stipulations resulted in the withdrawal of the offer of the loan and the considerable scaling down of the project, which eventually became the "Glencolumbkille Sheep Farmers Co-operative". This was essentially a collective marketing operation only, with agricultural production remaining in the hands of small farmers; McDyer's original vision for the communalisation of farming in the

district had therefore come to nothing.

Although frustrated by this personal setback, McDyer was convinced that the centralised and “paternalistic” nature of government planning acted in such a way as to suppress what could be achieved by local communities acting autonomously, a philosophy that was heavily influenced by his commitment to radical socialism. However, he also realised that the economic resources of Glencolumbkille were insufficient for the promotion of industrial development in the absence of external aid. In 1954, he wrote a memorandum directly to Eammon de Valera, who had recently been re-elected Taoiseach, imploring him to put pressure upon the Gaeltacht development authority, Gaeltara Eireann, to establish industrial units in Glencolumbkille. This letter resulted directly in the building of the first factory in the parish, a manufacturing plant for Donegal Tweed, which opened in December 1954 and operated continuously until 1973, when production was relocated to the neighbouring town of Kilcar (ibid.: 72-3). The immediate success of the factory was hailed by McDyer as evidence for the viability of rural industrialisation in Ireland, and led him to embark upon his most ambitious projects to date. Through negotiations with the Irish Sugar Company, McDyer came up with an initiative to turn over 200 acres of land in the parish to vegetable production, which would then be canned in a locally-owned plant. The capital required was raised through an extensive lecture tour in North America, which brought McDyer’s views to a wider audience, and a share-ownership scheme in the local district, the factory eventually opening in 1962 at a ceremony attended by the then Taoiseach Sean Lemass. In addition, a hand-knitting and crocheting co-operative was created in 1964, which was followed two years later by the conversion of derelict school buildings into business premises for a machine-knitting venture, facilitated by a grant provided by the Industrial Development Authority. Whilst creating significant employment in the area, the two schemes met with varying degrees of success. The vegetable growing and canning project had a relatively troublesome history, and problems with crop-rotation, opposition from local farmers and mounting losses resulted in the abandonment of vegetable production in 1973, and the buy-out of the plant by a local company for fish processing. The machine-knitting co-operative was scaled-down from the early 1970s onwards, and eventually collapsed in 1976 (although it was subsequently re-opened under a new manager).³⁷

Inspired by a series of lecture tours McDyer undertook throughout western Ireland during the 1960s and his active involvement in the "Defence of the West" campaign, organised by the Conference of Western Bishops, the Glencolumbkille Development Association was established in 1970, in order to take overall control of the various schemes which were still operational in the parish. A number of other projects were initiated by the Development Association during the 1970s, aimed at harnessing the tourism potential of the area; most of these were, however, either still-born or commercial failures. The G.D.A.- and with it Father McDyer's vision of economic independence for the people of his parish- was eventually wound-up in 1980, with total debts amounting to over £100,000 (ibid.: 106). Remaining assets were sold off and the small profit thus generated placed in a trust fund to finance independent development activities in the Third World.

The "Glencolumbkille experiment" in local development promoted by Father McDyer has been characterised by Vincent Tucker as "the only significant challenge to the new development philosophy introduced by Dr. Whitaker in 1958"³⁷ and something which "raised the possibility of communal self-help as an alternative to waiting for the government to rescue the west" (Tucker 1989: 295). However, the extent to which the various projects may be regarded as employing a genuinely "bottom-up" strategy, as Tucker suggests, is highly questionable. A detailed reading of McDyer's autobiography indicates that the one over-riding factor in the success or otherwise of each scheme established in the parish between 1952 and 1980 (with the exception of the building of the community hall) was the attitude of state bodies towards them: without grant assistance, none of the projects would have been possible to implement. Indeed, a recurrent theme in the autobiography is the continuous frustration McDyer felt at having to be financially dependent upon government departments and development agencies, and the need to acquiesce to external pressures and demands which resulted from this. His enthusiasm, as well as that of his parishioners, was "continually dampened

³⁷ It should be noted that the problematic experiences of the G.C.S./G.D.A. in establishing industrial projects in Donegal were by no means unique; indeed, they largely typified early attempts to introduce industry into the Gaeltacht areas of Ireland as a whole. As Kane noted in her study of Gaeltacht industrialisation:

Government-subsidised light industry in the Gaeltacht has been characterised by the kinds of limitations found in the experimental monkey's 'wire mother'; the basic structure is there, but it cannot reproduce, and the associated, somewhat indefinable elements which make life attractive are missing. Gaeltarra Eireann's introduction of 'economic viability' into the Gaeltacht was hindered initially by lack of recognition of the necessity for provision of the 'social accretions' of industrialisation; and later, by lack of facilities and finance for their provision (1978: 844).

³⁸ This comment refers to Whitaker's paper Economic Development, the publication of which heralded a sea-change in Irish economic policy. This is discussed further in chapter three, section I.

by [the] great stumbling block", namely the "solid wall of bureaucratic resistance" (McDyer 1982: 91), which nevertheless "held the key to the purse" (ibid.: 68). It is clear that, from McDyer's perspective, the principal factor which precipitated the ultimate collapse of the development association was his own inability to negotiate effectively with the representatives of state departments and agencies; an objective interpretation of the history of the various projects put in train would suggest that there was intransigence on both sides. However, McDyer is rather less candid regarding the degree to which he enjoyed the full support of the "tightly knit community " (ibid.: 91) during his years as its advocate and leader. It appears that only during the early years of his time in the parish were the opinions of the local population fully represented, and, as he admits, by 1979, the development association consisted only of himself and two other people (ibid.: 104). From the early 1960s onwards, McDyer adopted an increasingly dictatorial approach to development activities, preferring to rely upon his own instincts rather than canvas the views of the local populace, and as the number of projects escalated, his parishioners became less and less involved in their management. In a comprehensive evaluation of the initiatives undertaken by Father McDyer, Breathnach and Regan argue that this failure to engender sufficient popular support locally was the key factor underlying their eventual commercial stagnation.

As we shall see in following chapters, many of the types of initiatives promoted by Father McDyer have been repeated throughout Donegal in recent years, stimulated by the presence of a large number of EU and other development programmes operating in the county. And most significantly, his experiences in dealing with the bureaucratic structures of the Irish state are also reflected in the way community development operates in the county today. Far from being unique, then, the Glencolumbkille experiment merely anticipated contemporary difficulties faced by local people in articulating their needs, desires and visions for the development of their own areas to those exerting control over resources. This issue will form one of the main thrusts of my analysis outlined over the forthcoming pages.

Chapter Three.

Local Development in the Republic of Ireland. An Overview.

I. Introduction.

On Easter Sunday 1934, Eammon de Valera, Taoiseach and leader of the Fianna Fáil party, gave a radio broadcast to the nation in which he outlined his vision for the future of the Irish Free State. It was to become perhaps the most famous speech ever made by an Irish politician. De Valera envisaged a country which would be economically self-sufficient, populated by “people who valued material wealth only as a basis of a right of living, of a people who were satisfied with a frugal comfort and devoted their leisure to things of the spirit; a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the romplings of sturdy children, the contests of athletic youths, the laughter of comely maidens; whose firesides would be forums for the wisdom of serene old age. It would, in a word, be the home of a people living the life that God desired men to live”.¹

Since the party’s victory in the general election of 1933, Fianna Fáil had been pursuing an isolationist strategy, surrounding an expansion of domestic industries and markets with economic protectionism and import substitution. Although this led initially to significant increases in industrial employment, which rose by approximately 40% over the decade (O’Hearn 1990: 12), the country’s Economic War with Britain (1932-1938) had a devastating effect upon Irish agriculture. Fianna Fáil lost power briefly in the general election of 1948, being replaced by a Fine Gael-led coalition, and the first policies aimed at attracting new industry to Ireland and opening up the economy were put in place (Jacobsen 1994: 60). Most significant among these were the formation of the Industrial Development Authority in 1948-1949 and a Grants Board to encourage investment in underdeveloped areas in 1951, both created with the help of aid received by the U.S. under the Marshall Plan (O’Hearn 1990: 15-16). Fianna Fáil regained power in 1951, a decade characterised by a series of economic crises associated with substantial balance of payments deficits, high levels of inflation and unemployment, industrial and agricultural

¹ Quoted in Girvin (1993: 383).

decline, and a marked loss of population. Over 400,000 people left Ireland during the 1950s, the rate of emigration reaching a point in the latter half of the decade when it almost equated to the number of births (Breen et al 1990: 35).

During the 1950s, the protectionist regime was progressively abandoned, and Irish economic policy from the late 1950s onwards (in common with that of most other western countries) largely followed export-led industrialisation and Keynesian orthodoxy.² Allied to this was the notion that within any given territory, specific geographical advantages of certain regions or “nodes” may be identified, which will in turn indicate the areas most likely to profit from public investment. Wealth will subsequently spread throughout the economy via a “trickle-down” process, eventually benefiting all sectors of the population. Development in this conception is perceived as a natural, unilineal process, inherently teleological in the sense of aiming for the maximum possible levels of industrialisation, employment, income levels and standards of living (cf. Wallman 1977: 1). Dr. T.K. Whitaker’s seminal blueprint for economic growth in Ireland, published in 1958, was founded largely on Keynesian principles, and formed the back-bone of domestic economic policy until the early 1980s, as governments attempted to stem the continued tide of emigration and persistently high levels of unemployment through a macro-economic strategy married to five-year planning and the attraction of foreign investment. Mobile multinational corporations were encouraged to site in relatively underdeveloped areas, through the provision of grants and other incentives (Gillmore 1986: 26-7).³

The influence of this agenda was initially dramatic: between 1961 and 1971, emigration was virtually halted, the population of the country rose by 100,000, unemployment fell to 4%, most rural counties experienced a rise of population and there was a fifty percent rise in living standards (Conway 1989: 225; Jacobsen 1993: 44; Chubb 1992: 24). This growth was highly uneven, however, concentrated largely along the eastern seaboard and in urban areas, and certain regions - particularly the rural west, north-west and south-west - benefited only marginally by comparison (NESF 1997: 49). During this time, there was a marked proliferation of local development movements throughout

² O’Hearn (1990) provides a lucid overview of the political circumstances which underpinned this shift from protectionism to “industrialisation by invitation”.

³ For a comprehensive analysis of the evolution and impact of this strategy, see Jacobsen 1979.

rural areas in Ireland, which has been attributed by a number of scholars to “the dominant thrust of modernisation” (Varley 1991b: 48) and the disparities which resulted from the “trickle down” approach (Tucker 1989: 289; see also Coyle 1996: 276-277; NESF 1994: 112).⁴ The relative prosperity of the 1960s and much of the 1970s⁵ gave way to the depressions of the 1980s, which revealed the underlying weakness of the Irish economy, dogged by one of the highest per capita debt levels in the world and a very narrow industrial base. One of the effects of this was to undermine the policy of industrial dispersal. Firms began to favour larger urban centres (NESF 1997: 51), which led to a reversal of some of the gains experienced in underdeveloped regions during the previous two decades (Storey 1997: 82). In 1987, the nine Regional Development Organisations, established in 1969 to direct industry away from the capital and other favoured areas, were abolished, heralding the end of the government’s regional strategy towards industrial development (Laffan 1989: 52-53).

Perhaps the most significant event in Ireland’s post-war economic history occurred in the late 1980s. The doubling of the Structural Funds budget in 1988 and Ireland’s qualification as an “Objective One” region in Europe, with wealth below 75% of the EU average, had a lasting impact upon government strategy towards development, with policies from then on becoming welded to those of the European Commission. Unemployment remained at persistently high levels until the early part of the 1990s (around 22%) when the economy began to expand at unprecedented rates. Since 1993, average growth levels of around 10% per annum have been recorded, unemployment and inflation have fallen markedly and the GDP per capita has increased to its highest ever level (outstripping that of the U.K. in 1997).⁶ This “economic miracle” has led to the Republic being dubbed the “Celtic Tiger” of Europe.⁷ Whilst the attraction of foreign investment remains a very important aspect of Ireland’s macro-economic strategy, economic policies since the late 1980s have emphasised the importance of local initiatives to the stimulation of enterprise and job creation (Ó Cinnéide 1995: 4; Walsh

⁴ Breathnach argues that this also explains an increase in community development groups during recent years in Ireland, and especially since the country’s accession to the EU (1986: 78).

⁵ During the 1970s, the average annual growth rate of the Irish economy was 4.5%, almost twice that of the EEC average (Chubb 1992: 24).

⁶ In 1996, Irish GDP per capita was 97% of the EU average (Breathnach 1998: 305). (But see Jacobsen (1993: 46), however, who argues that the calculation of the economy’s average GDP is misleading because it fails to take into consideration the effect of the repatriation of the profits of multinational firms and interest payments on the national debt).

⁷ Taylor (1998) prefers the term “Emerald Tiger”.

1995: 62-63). The high priority assigned to the support of local development is exemplified by the fact that it represents one of the four key "goals" outlined in The National Development Plan 1994-1999 (Government of Ireland 1993: 31). Associated with this paradigm, which has been borrowed almost wholesale from the EU (Conroy 1996: 31), is a recognition that local communities are best equipped to develop strategies for their own areas, in partnership with the state and the European Commission.

Economic growth has continued to be uneven, both sectorally and geographically, however, and its rising tide shows no signs of lifting all the country's boats at the present time. A report published by the Conference of Religions of Ireland in 1997, for example, revealed that there were more people living below the poverty line than there had been ten years previously, and that long-term unemployment had fallen by only 300 during the previous year.⁸ Similarly, comprehensive studies conducted by Callen et al (1996) and Curtin et al (1996) indicate that wealth disparities have displayed an upward trend during this period of economic growth, and poverty remains a major problem affecting a significant proportion of the country's population. A number of commentators have argued that Ireland's status as the "Celtic Tiger" of Europe is unlikely to be sustained in the long run, as competitive pressures from Eastern Europe erode its ability to maintain the level of inward investment at the present rates (e.g. Shirlow 1995; Kirby 1997; Breathnach 1998: 314-5).⁹ Furthermore, whilst the Structural Funds are estimated to have added only between four and five percentage points to what Ireland's GNP would otherwise have been over the period 1995-1999 (ESRI 1997: xviii-xx)¹⁰, their withdrawal after 1999 is likely to have an additional and highly significant impact upon the Irish economy. In reviewing Ireland's current economic position, Kirby goes as far to remark that "it is both inaccurate and unwise to regard Ireland as developed" (1997: 144).

⁸ Cited in *Irish Independent* 26th. May 1997. According to Jacobsen, writing in 1993, one million of Ireland's citizens- and 40% of the its children- live in poverty (1993: 43).

⁹ In the view of Foley and Griffith, Ireland's weakly-articulated indigenous industrial base is likely to curtail economic growth in the long term. They conclude their paper by stating that:

It is most unlikely that an economy would reach advanced economy and income levels through a reliance on the branches of multinationals (1992: 385).

¹⁰ Such estimates actually vary widely across the literature. Thus, whilst Jacobsen estimates that the contribution of Structural Funds to the Irish economy amounted to a "paltry" 1.2% of total GNP in 1992 (1993: 46), Matthews contends that when trade gains and other (non-structural) EU transfers are taken into account, the figure was closer to nine percent for the same year (1994: 26; see also Matthews 1989: 8, where the author arrives at a similar figure for the period 1979-1986). Driever, meanwhile, calculates the figure to be 2.5% for 1993, rising to 7.5% if agricultural payments are included (1994: 318). Given the growth of the Irish economy since the early part of the 1990s, one can assume that the current EU contribution is likely to be nearer the lower rather than upper range of these estimates.

The above account represents a potted history of the changes which have occurred in relation to state policies towards development in Ireland during the post-war period. Ireland is a small, politically centralised country, and in any analysis of Irish development, whatever its scale of reference, the state is rarely far from the surface. In as much as this is a state-centred history, however, it typifies the domination of macro-scale, economic analyses in the vast literature on Irish development. Scholarship has been preoccupied with a rather narrow range of concerns, surrounding the country's post- or neo-colonial status (see, for example, Kennedy 1973; Walsh 1979; Crotty 1986; Coulter 1992; O'Dowd 1992; Greenslade 1995; Kissane 1995); dependency theory and "peripherality" (Jacobsen 1979; Baker 1987; Breathnach 1988; Girvin 1989; Breen et al 1990; Foley and Griffith 1992; Keating and Desmond 1993; O'Hearn 1993; O'Connor 1995; Kirby 1997); and the evolution of public administration system (Pyne 1974; Scott 1985).

Although useful as they undoubtedly are, what is manifestly lacking in these studies is any attempt to problematise the state itself (cf. O'Dowd 1991: 97). In this respect, the validity of these approaches has been brought into question in recent years as devolution and partnership have become the watchwords of Irish development planning and the locus of the state has consequently become far less distinct.¹¹ With the proliferation of local partnership boards, administrative responsibilities no longer rest exclusively with the bureaucracy in the capital, and groups previously denied access to the corridors of officialdom in Dublin 2 have now gained a voice in national policy making.¹² Even more importantly, the emergence of the EU as a new vessel of power has further disrupted the relationship between the state and the locale, and introduced questions concerning the nature of authority and democratic governance as the Irish polity has become inextricably bonded to that of the European Commission and local people are increasingly looking to Brussels, rather than Dublin, in seeking development aid for their own areas. Moreover, in the context of lasting peace in the North, it is to be expected that the establishment of new channels of communication across

¹¹ As O'Dowd has reminded us:

...any adequate analysis of the state must register at least that the concerns of the state cross-cut the economic, political and cultural arenas. Analyses which concentrate on the political sphere, for example, often fail to recognise how the state responds to, and is shaped, by wider socio-economic forces (1991: 97).

¹² This observation reflects a wider trend occurring across Europe. In the view of Smith, for example:

One of the principal observations made by Western political science over the last two decades is that policy-making is increasingly made up of negotiating spaces within which state-actor dominated vertical hierarchies are the exception rather than the rule (1995: 46, quoted in Coyle 1996: 277).

the border will serve to cloud the boundaries between the two states on the isle of Ireland in the future.¹³ The state has become a mercurial entity, geographically diffuse and definitionally ambiguous, in Ireland's accession to the forefront of the "new Europe".

This discussion is intended to introduce the reader to the empirical data presented in the next four chapters of the study. A brief history of local development in Ireland is followed by an overview of the various programmes sponsored by the EU during the first round of the Structural Funds (1989-1994), in order to demonstrate the context in which the current environment of local development in Ireland has evolved over the course of the past decade. The fourth section of the chapter is concerned with an exploration of some of the issues which emerged from the experience of these initiatives, with a particular emphasis upon the discourse characteristic of professional development planning. The chapter concludes with a critique of the approach adopted by professional evaluators and others in ignoring the social context of development activity, thus "setting the scene" for the four chapters which follow.

II. A Brief History of Local Development in Ireland.

In examining the history of local development in Ireland, it is necessary, first of all, to clarify exactly what is meant by the term. In this study, in view of my interest in the discourses of development, it is defined as any actions relating to development (understood in its broadest interpretation), which occur as a result of participation by local residents in the decision-making processes associated with their implementation. This might involve the devolution of administrative responsibilities from higher-level structures, or initiatives which emanate directly from the locale. As highlighted in the previous chapter, the role of the state in promoting local development is of crucial significance to the understanding of the way the movement has developed, and this discussion therefore begins with a cursory overview of the evolution of state policies over the course of the century.

¹³ Although the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 is likely to enhance the prospects for cross-border economic co-operation, Anderson and Goodman's (1994) analysis of the responses of Northern Irish politicians and business leaders to integrationist pressures suggests that the entrenched views of those on both sides of the politico-religious divide is likely to significantly hamper this process. On the one hand, they found that Unionists were, unsurprisingly, highly suspicious of any attempts which may lead to a re-unification of the island; on the other, they assert that the "triumphalist" arguments of Nationalists- that European Integration will inevitably make the conflict and "national question" redundant- may well prove counter-productive in the long term. (Similar conclusions are also drawn by Tannam 1995).

II.1. The Role of the State.

Despite the sovereign status assigned to the rural community in the theology of the Fianna Fáil party, the state's attitude towards local development was largely one of rank indifference during the de Valera years. With its electoral basis located in the small farming regions of the Midlands and West, Fianna Fáil viewed itself as the champion of the working classes, and any "grass-roots" actions which threatened its hegemony in this regard were either suppressed or remained unsupported. A passing amendment to the Local Government Act of 1941, allowing local authorities to assist local voluntary groups in community development activities, represented the only significant legislation to emerge during this period in relation to local development. The publication of the Second Programme for Economic Expansion (SPEE) in 1964, which included a separate chapter on rural development, represented a sea-change in the government's position, and heralded a decade marked by a new relationship between the state and community groups in Ireland.

Two reports, compiled respectively by the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Problems of Small Western Farms and An Foras Talúntais (a precursor to Teagasc) in 1962 and 1963, both recommended the establishment of area-based, multisectoral structures as a principal delivery strategy for rural development in Ireland. In terms of their recognition of the potential of devolved administrative arrangements and of the need to harness voluntary effort, Commins and Keane (1994: 104) argue that these ideas had many parallels with the ideology of current policies towards local development promoted by the EU. The SPEE incorporated some of these recommendations in creating County Development Teams across the country, which were charged with the promotion of community development activities and co-ordinating voluntary groups across their areas.¹⁴ The administration of these groups was entirely in the hands of the local authorities, however, and in this respect they represented a watering-down of the more radical "partnership" arrangements which had been envisaged in the two reports. The importance of diversifying the rural economy received further attention in the Third Programme for Economic Expansion 1969-1972, which included a commitment "to devote special attention to the integrated development of small farm areas" (Government of Ireland 1969: 80), and a number of

¹⁴ County Development Teams were the pre-cursors of County Enterprise Boards, introduced in 1994 under the current round of the Structural Funds (1994-1999).

statements concerning the promotion of state-local partnerships. By this time, however, Ireland was preparing for EEC membership, and government policies began to be oriented towards those emanating from Brussels. The period between 1973 and the mid-1980s is described by Commins and Keane as being characterised by “the eclipse of rural development” (1994: 111), as the Common Agriculture Policy became the dominant instrument of development planning in rural Ireland and any latent policy actions aimed at encouraging integration, partnership and localism were quickly removed from the agenda. Developments since this time will be taken up in the third section of this chapter, in which Irish and EU development policy since 1988 is examined. Another historical avenue can be identified in relation to local development in Ireland, however, which is equally significant to that of the state and EU, and to which we now turn.

II.2. Local Development and Community Activism.

As was mentioned in chapter two, the origins of what may be termed a “grass roots” response to underdevelopment may be traced back to the agricultural co-operatives of the late nineteenth-century, and in this respect, its history is essentially coterminous with that of rural development (O’Dwyer 1994: 7). In attempting to stem the tide of emigration, improve farmer’s incomes, initiate land-reform and ameliorate the devastating effects of the harvest failures of the 1840s and 1880s, such bodies were committed to an ethic of local collectivism coupled with a deep suspicion of the state (which, of course, meant Imperialist Britain) and all that it stood for. Whilst these organisations were important in the campaign for Home Rule and the creation of such initiatives as the Gaelic League, for example, they were organised predominantly around agricultural production and their activities were therefore confined to a narrow range of interests. Additionally, despite their wide share-holding basis among the farming population, Tovey (1998) has also questioned the extent to which nineteenth-century co-operativism can be regarded as a truly populist and broadly-constituted movement.

It was not until 1931 that the first formal scheme aimed at initiating a process of rural renewal “from the bottom up” was established nationally in Ireland. Muintir na Tíre, meaning “community of the land” in English, was founded in Tipperary by an enthusiastic clergyman, Fr. Hayes, upon a (predominantly

Catholic) philosophy which held that the community represents the primary basis of society. In its early years, Muintir na Tíre was instrumental in the formation of the first parish councils in rural areas, many of which evolved into the development and community groups of the present day. It was also firmly committed to the principles of local self help and determination, and thus anticipated many of the policies introduced by the EU over fifty years later. During the 1940s and 1950s, Muintir na Tíre successfully lobbied for the development of infrastructure in rural areas, and numerous national schools, parish halls, electrification programmes and group water schemes were established across Ireland by local guilds of the national body. Crickley argues that many of these projects “were completed far sooner than would otherwise have been the case with consequent benefits for all involved through the combination of local voluntary effort with some state money and expertise” (1996: 22). Whilst the ethos promoted by Muintir na Tíre found a certain coherence with de Valera’s philosophy of self-sufficiency, the late 1950s witnessed a deterioration in the organisation’s relationship with the Irish government, associated with the publication of the First Programme for Economic Expansion which denied Muintir na Tíre a role in local development (ibid.: 22-3). In response, the organisation began to seek an active dialogue with the State, something which cumulated in the re-drafting of its constitution in 1971 to include an express recognition of the value of state-local partnerships (Curtin 1997).

In the early 1970s, through the support of an EU grant, Muintir na Tíre embarked upon an ambitious programme to extend the number of parish councils (by then re-named community councils) to cover all areas of rural Ireland. This was inspired in part by the government’s rejection (in 1973) of a proposal contained in a 1971 White Paper on local government reform to establish a statutory framework for community councils, which would have allowed representatives of the latter to sit on local authority committees, in effect creating a sub-county tier of local government (Commins and Keane 1994: 110; Roche 1982: 302-4). Despite the fact that over 300 councils were affiliated to the national body by the mid-1970s, the initiative floundered towards the end of the decade, a lack of representation within councils themselves combined with an increasing inability to service them adequately leading to a marked decline in the organisation’s influence.¹⁵ According to

¹⁵ Varley (1991b: 51-56) provides a lucid overview of this period in Muintir na Tíre’s history.

Curtin (1997), Muintir na Tíre has been in a “permanent state of crisis” for the past two decades, compounded by the rather indifferent attitude that the state has adopted towards it (cf. Varley 1991b: 54). In recent years, the organisation has been sustained only through a joint working arrangement with the Garda Síochána, which has provided funding for the establishment of Community Alert Committees around the country aimed at preventing crime against elderly people.

Since the mid-1970s, the influence of Muintir na Tíre has declined markedly, and it has effectively been replaced by a number of other “community led” development movements in rural Ireland. These include the Gaeltacht Co-operatives¹⁶, which began in Kerry in 1966 and subsequently spread throughout the Irish-speaking areas of the country, and the Community Enterprise scheme of the 1980s, which led to the formation of over 250 groups by 1985.¹⁷ Whilst both of these movements received their initial stimulus from state programmes, Varley (1991b) argues that they may both be viewed as broadly-based movements, in the sense that they attracted wide support among local populations. However, neither were successful in the long-term. Breathnach discovered that, by the mid 1980s, well over half of the Gaeltacht co-operatives were operating at a loss, affected by a decline in share-holding base and a shrinkage of markets (1986: 87), and those that have survived have done so largely through the assistance of the Gaeltacht industrial development authorities, *Úderás na Gaeltachta* and *Roínn na Gaeltachta*. Equally, despite a claim by the Minister of Labour in 1989 that up to 10,000 new jobs could be created each year through Community Enterprise, these groups have encountered similar difficulties in matching performance to expectations. As was the case with the Creeslough Co-operative and the Glencolumbkille Development Society described in chapter two, the conclusion that must be drawn from the experience of these movements is that local development initiatives are unlikely to succeed in the absence of support from the state (cf. Varley 1991a).

As alluded to above, the past decade has witnessed a proliferation of local

¹⁶ Despite being located in a Gaeltacht region and encompassing broadly similar aims, Father McDyer’s movement in Donegal operated independently of these initiatives, which were facilitated by state grants and subject to government regulation.

¹⁷ Although it has been virtually ignored in the literature, one might suggest that the Gaeltacht civil rights movement (*Gluaiseacht Cearta Sibhialta na Gaeltachta*) of the late 1960s, under whose auspices a number of largely successful campaigns for Irish-language broadcasting and local political autonomy were organised, also provided a significant impetus for local development activism in the west of Ireland (cf. Akutagawa 1990: 59).

development groups operating in Ireland, as the EU has become the primary actor involved in the promotion and funding of local development. Many of these have developed as a response to EU initiatives, such as the First European Anti-Poverty Programme, which ran from 1975-1980, or the more recent LEADER initiative. These new structures display marked parallels with those established by Muintir na Tíre or the Gaeltacht Co-operatives scheme, and are highly significant in terms of the changing relationship between the locale and the state in Ireland. They are therefore worthy of detailed examination.

III. The SEA, Maastricht and Beyond. Local Development in Ireland 1988-1994.

Since Ireland's entry into the European Economic Community, development policies pursued by successive governments have been strongly influenced by thinking in Brussels, to the extent that the strategic approach of Irish development planning over this period has largely mirrored that of the European Commission across the Continent. Throughout the 1970s and much of the 1980s, the CAP and the European Regional Development Fund (established in 1975) represented the primary vehicles of European structural aid. Agricultural subsidies and price supports accounted for much of the net income which Ireland received from the EU, and, with ERD funding utilised to match national expenditure on public capital projects, a local or regional dimension was largely absent from Irish development planning (Cuddy 1987; Commins 1993; Shorthall 1994).

It was not until the late 1980s that the EU began to explore alternative ways of redressing economic disparities in Europe. The circumstances which led to this "paradigm shift" in development policy are discussed elsewhere in this study, and it is not my intention to rehearse them again here. However, it is necessary to examine in some detail the effect this change of policy had in Ireland. The remainder of this discussion will therefore be concerned with an analysis of the particular programmes which were implemented in the country during this period, as they represent the precursors of many of the EU programmes which together form the principal focus of subsequent chapters. The accounts which follow are largely based upon evaluations of the initiatives conducted by professional consultants, which are often taken

up with extremely detailed appraisals of the grant-aiding activities of each. As an analysis of the nature of funding distribution lies beyond the scope of this study, only passing reference will be made to this aspect of the initiatives. The discussion is therefore confined to three specific areas: the origins of the various programmes, the model of development utilised in each and the ways in which this was delivered in practice. In this way, the description of the implementation of each initiative is followed by a review of some of the main issues which emerged during their period of operation.

III.1. The Pilot Programme for Integrated Rural Development 1988-1990.

The introduction of the Pilot Programme for Integrated Rural Development (IRD) in Ireland represented a direct response to the demands of the EU- following the publication of *The Future of Rural Society*- that the planning and day-to-day administration of development programmes across the continent should encompass a far greater level of local involvement than had previously been the case. No longer were state actors and development experts to be the main players in the process; instead, they would be joined in partnership by local volunteers who had an interest in the development of their own areas. Sectorally-specific programmes implemented across an entire region or country would be complemented by area-based initiatives, through which a more holistic approach to development funding and actions would be pursued.

The IRD programme was therefore the first EU programme to operate nationally in Ireland which incorporated the ethic of “bottom-up development” as the overarching mechanism of its delivery strategy.¹⁸ The EU’s funding contribution accounted for the largest proportion of a modest total budget of £1.5m, the remainder coming from the Irish exchequer. Twelve areas, with populations ranging from 2,000 to 30,000 people were selected as the locations in which the programme was to be implemented¹⁹, chosen principally on the basis of their representativeness of the variety of rural

¹⁸ A caveat must be added to this statement, since the Second EU Anti-Poverty Programme (Poverty 2), which operated from 1985 until 1989 (see below, section III.5), also incorporated a substantial “bottom-up” component. However, given that only three areas in Ireland participated in this particular initiative (Louisberg in County Mayo, Inishowen in Donegal and North West Connemara in Galway), the IRD Pilot was the first “bottom up” development programme to be implemented nationally.

¹⁹ The areas were: Inishowen in county Donegal, Manorhamilton in Leitrim, the Inny Basin in Westmeath and Cavan, Cooley in Louth, Macamores in Wexford, Skibbereen in Cork, Slieve Felim in Tipperary, Gort in Clare and Galway, Erris in Mayo, the South West Islands (including the Aran Islands and the Blaskets), the North West islands (islands off Mayo and Donegal) and South West Kerry. (Data taken from map provided by O’Malley 1993: 245).

districts in the country, as well as the need to maximise geographical coverage across the state (O'Malley 1993: 245). The Department of Agriculture and Food appointed "co-ordinators" (or "animators") to work in each area, with responsibility for recruiting a "core team" of (ideally) eight people who would manage the programme and decide on the distribution of funding over the course of its two year lifespan. In order to ensure that the programme was as broadly based as possible, the co-ordinators were also able to appoint representatives of important local organisations or interest groups to sub-committees and/or advisory boards, focused upon specific development sectors or geographical areas. Although co-ordinators were instructed to ensure that the new structures incorporated a range of expertise and experience, the primary determining factor used for selecting the individuals who were to be involved in them was an expressed commitment to the development of their own areas and a willingness to act in an unpaid capacity in order to bring this about. Voluntarism was therefore viewed as an essential aspect of the programme from the beginning. There were no restrictions placed upon the types of projects which could be funded under the programme, the only stipulation being that actions should be aimed at the general development of an area in accordance with the wishes of its residents.

In addition to these local organisations, the government also established national fora through which the members of the groups could meet and share their experiences. Groups were linked with one another via a "twinning" and, later, networking arrangement, and individuals were encouraged to pay regular visits to other areas involved in the initiative in order to exchange ideas and discuss their concerns. Four workshops were also convened over the lifetime of the programme, attended by representatives of the Department, the twelve co-ordinators as well as by local people.

A comprehensive evaluation of the initiative conducted by O'Malley in 1992²⁰ concluded that the IRD approach had enabled the mobilisation of significant voluntary activity in rural areas in Ireland, and many actions were pursued which either would not have occurred or would have happened more slowly.²¹ O'Malley also notes that certain types of projects, which necessitate co-ordination across a range of state agencies and voluntary groups, are more amenable to the IRD approach than others. The experience of the Inishowen

²⁰ A similar version to the General Summary of this report appeared under the same title in Murray and Greer (1993).

Tourism Co-operative is singled out by the author as an example of the benefits of strategic planning: an array of different activities were pursued during the life-time of the programme, including festivals, boat trips, accommodation provision, the promotion of golf and angling, all of which brought together voluntary actors, state agencies, the County Tourism Committee and County Council Members (ibid.: 43).²²

The author does add a number of caveats to his assessment of the programme. Firstly, he argues that the short time-span militated against a comprehensive analysis of each group's grant-aiding role, since "many of the projects selected were still in the planning stage or at the very early stages of their implementation when the pilot period concluded" (ibid.: 7). He does point out, however, that economic-orientated actions tended to dominate the types of projects funded, with the tourism sector accounting for 28% of the total number of grants distributed: by far the highest proportion overall. Although activities in this area may have been managed by community and voluntary groups, the author's own analysis of the figures indicates that less than 18% of the funding was allocated to community development and what he labels as "social/cultural" projects (ibid.: 5). This emphasis upon the economic sphere was perhaps due to the occupations of people who were members of the core groups, well over half of whom were managers, business people and professionals (O'Malley 1993: 248). Public administration employees and representatives of farming organisations also had a high level of representation. Despite O'Malley's comment that "most of the core group members had a record of voluntary involvement in local organisations and development activities" (ibid.: 249), it would appear that the understanding of the term "local community" was interpreted somewhat narrowly by the co-ordinators in appointing those responsible for the delivery of the programme at local levels. As will be demonstrated in later chapters, this latter observation is central to my analysis of EU programmes currently

²¹ In the author's words:

The pilot programme demonstrated that the approach adopted is capable of stimulating considerable voluntary effort by local people to promote economic and social development in their own areas. It was clear, too, that those involved generally found the experience worthwhile and looked forward to continuation of the programme in some form. In terms of what it aimed to achieve, the programme could be regarded as successful, providing good grounds for continuing this approach with appropriate modifications (ibid.: 9).

²² In relation to the Inishowen Tourism Co-op, research conducted by Ó Cinnéide (1989) revealed that the project experienced initial difficulties in persuading private sector tourism accommodation providers to become involved in the venture. It was only when increased visitors and revenues began to be generated that they became involved in the process, something which illustrates the often profound divisions which exist between community development and economic actors in Ireland. (Cited in Byrne et al 1991: 15-16).

operating in Donegal.

In the summer of 1991, it was decided to extend the pilot initiative for another two years. However, a number of changes were made to the way the programme operated, the most significant of which was the abandonment of the area-based approach in favour of a concentration of activity in selected economic spheres (namely small and community enterprises, rural infrastructures or farm diversification). It was also incorporated into mainstream funding through its amalgamation with the Operational Programme for Rural Development, which had another two years to run.

III.2. The Operational Programme for Rural Development (OPRD) 1989-1993.

The OPRD was one of the programmes funded under the agreement struck between the Irish Government and the EU, known as the Community Support Framework (CSF)²³, to facilitate spending under the first round of the Structural Funds. The initiative was comprised of five sub-programmes (focused upon agricultural diversification, small and community enterprises, rural infrastructure, research and development/marketing and human resources, each of which contained a number of sub-measures), and, unlike the IRD scheme, was delivered principally by government departments and state agencies.²⁴ In this respect, the extent to which the OPRD can be regarded as a *local* development programme is questionable²⁵, but it is included here in order to contextualise the policy environment which led to the development of Operational Programmes in the second CSF (1994-1999) incorporating enhanced levels of subsidiarity.

The primary objectives of the scheme were to “maintain and strengthen the rural community,...improve the quality of life and foster a sense of community identity among people living in rural areas” (Department of Agriculture and Food [n.d.]: 7; see also NESC 1994: 70; Kearney et al 1995: 11 and Shorthall 1994: 243). Sixty percent of a total budget of £120m was provided by the EC,

²³ The Community Support Framework for Ireland 1989-1993 was based upon the National Development Plan for Ireland 1989-1993, and subsequent negotiations between the Government and the EC. It was adopted in October 1989 (Government of Ireland 1993: 13). (CSFs operate in all member states of the EU, regardless of their Objective status).

²⁴ Three government departments- the Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, the Department of the Marine and the Department of the Environment- were responsible for the overall co-ordination of the programme, with state and semi-state agencies such as Teagasc, Coillte, Bord Fáilte and Bord Iascaigh Mhara, as well as County Development Teams, being charged with its implementation (NESC 1994: 72).

²⁵ Although Tannam describes the programme as a “bottom up” initiative (1995: 72), he is, I think, mistaken in this regard.

with the remaining forty percent coming from the Government. It was intended to complement other initiatives such as the IRD and LEADER I through the funding of projects not covered by these programmes or by other elements of the CSF (Shorthall 1994: 243). Despite the emphasis upon the term “community” in the aims of the OPRD, the vast majority of measures funded were economic in nature and concentrated upon improving employment opportunities and income levels in rural areas.

In an assessment of the effectiveness of the OPRD, the National Economic and Social Council concludes that the programme did have a significant impact in rural areas, particularly in relation to the agritourism and mushroom-growing sectors (NESC 1994: 70-74). However, the report also states that the highly complex administrative structure of the OP militated against the formulation of general conclusions based upon the relationship between objectives, funding input and overall results. Moreover, in a section which again anticipates one of the central concerns of this study, the authors note that no “quantifiable targets” were specified in relation to the aims of the programme, as outlined above, which further hampered their ability to evaluate the degree to which they were achieved. It might be suggested that outcomes such as “strengthening the rural community” and “fostering a sense of community identity” are inherently non-quantifiable, even unmeasurable, and simply represent examples of “development labelling” in this context, to use Wood’s apt phrase.

The OPRD was dismantled in the second round of Structural Funds (1994-1999), with the small and medium sized enterprises sub-programme being transferred to new County Enterprise Boards, and the majority of other measures being incorporated into re-formulated Operational Programmes for Agriculture and Local, Urban and Rural Development.²⁶ This decision may be interpreted as an acknowledgment by the Government that national schemes controlled from Dublin were less effective than those which included an area-based dimension, such as the IRD programme and those discussed below.

²⁶ With regards to the latter, see chapter four, section II.

In 1991, the Government published a White Paper entitled *The Programme for Economic and Social Progress*, the product of a series of protracted negotiations between the Government and Trade Unions, IBEC, farming organisations and other interest groups. The PESP established a new incomes policy for Ireland, replacing that encapsulated in the *Programme for National Recovery* (1987), and outlined the Government's public sector spending plans for the following three years. Although the term "partnership" was not actually used, the document also outlined a series of recommendations concerning the most appropriate ways to address the issue of long-term unemployment in Ireland, which envisaged bringing together a range of actors from government departments and state agencies, "Social Partners" (Trade Unions and local employers), and community and voluntary groups in new area-based structures. The rationale underpinning this programme was strongly influenced by the experience of the IRD Programme and EC Community Initiatives that had operated in Ireland (most notably, Poverty 2), and also reflected a similar call made by the NESC in the previous year.²⁷ A National Co-ordinating Team was appointed to oversee the implementation of the programme and facilitate the preparation of area Action Plans. Twelve area-based partnerships were established in urban and rural areas across the country²⁸, and an Intermediary Funding Body (Area Development Management Ltd., which was also administered by a partnership board) was created by the Government in October 1992 to provide technical support and oversee the distribution of funding. The companies were managed by a local board of directors encompassing equal representation from each of the three sectors outlined above, and had a remit which went beyond the provision of grant-aid. Most of the partnerships acted as a bridge between unemployed people and state agencies, identifying educational and training needs and matching these to the various services provided. Courses were also developed by partnerships themselves in consultation with unemployed peoples' groups

²⁷ This report stated that:

Clearly, many local communities are affected by the services and receive resources from a range of state agencies- local government, Health Boards, the Department of Social Welfare, FAS, for example. The scope for area renewal and community based co-ordination must therefore be considerable. Evidence suggests that concerted, intensified programmes in small areas, containing elements of housing and environmental improvement as well as retraining and employment schemes and 'outreach' health and educational projects, can have an impact over and above the separate effects of individual programmes. Furthermore, the more closely involved are local communities in planning and delivery of area based projects, the more they will reflect local needs and priorities (NESC 1990: 74).

²⁸ The areas were: South West Kerry, North Mayo, South-West Wexford, West Waterford, Ballymun, Coolock/Darngale, Dundalk, Finglas, Dublin Inner City, Tallaght, Limerick City and Cork North City.

and the relevant agencies.

A comprehensive evaluation of the initiative was conducted by the Combat Poverty Agency in 1993 and 1994, which concluded that the programme was broadly successful in achieving its main objectives.²⁹ They also noted that the partnerships provided an important forum at local levels for co-ordination and information sharing across sectors and between organisations.

The partnership structure has helped bring together the main delivery agencies, firstly, to improve their knowledge of each other, and, secondly, to improve perceptions in the community of what they do and why they do it. For the community, the partnership is the first opportunity to meet the delivery agencies on an equal footing (ibid.: 63).

The funding provided to the twelve companies was extended beyond the end of the programme through another EU initiative- the Global Grant for Local Development- which commenced in January 1993.

III. 4. The Global Grant for Local Development 1992-1995.

In 1992, the European Commission and the Irish Government decided to establish a scheme aimed at extending the funding regime of the PESP partnership companies, and also to provide aid to selected local development groups in Ireland located in areas not then covered by other initiatives. The Global Grant scheme was managed by ADM Ltd., and funding was distributed (from January 1993 onwards) to 28 community groups and the 12 existing partnerships on the basis of local Area Action Plans drawn up in consultation with representatives of local community organisations, state agencies and social partners (NESC 1994: 94-5). With a total budget of £8m and involvement by over one thousand people as employees and board members of the organisations, the Global Grant was the largest area-based initiative to operate in Ireland during the first round of the Structural Funds. Although job creation was the principal focus, the targeted outcomes of the scheme were more

²⁹ In the authors' words:

The significant aspects of the initiative were that it raised awareness of the needs of people who are long term unemployed and the difficulties experienced by them in their search for work. Also, the initiative brought the three main sectors together to focus on specific areas of high unemployment to address problems in a multi-dimensional way which includes enterprise, job creation, education, training and local community development as its main areas of work (Craig and McKeown 1994: 124).

broadly based than those outlined for the PESP companies, with each group also expected to contribute to the infrastructural and environmental development of their areas.

An evaluation of the initiative conducted by Haase, McKeown and Rourke (1996) concluded that significant achievements were made by the partnerships and community groups during the life-time of the programme. Over 2000 enterprises were assisted either directly, via the provision of grant-aid, or indirectly, through their participation in training or mentoring courses. In addition, approximately 7000 people, most of whom were unemployed, received some form of education or training, figures which greatly surpassed initial expectation (ibid.: 10). However, the consultants also noted that there was a discernable difference of performance between the partnerships and the community groups, in terms of their relative success in fulfilling their stated objectives. The short time-span which elapsed between the announcement of decisions regarding the successful applicants and the final date for the submission of Area Action plans left the groups with only two and half months in which to prepare the latter, half the time which is generally held to be necessary for this process (ibid.: 6).³⁰

Two principal recommendations emerge from the report, which are highly significant in the context of the data presented elsewhere in this study. Firstly, the evaluation argues that the most successful organisations were those which acted essentially as lobbying agencies, persuading mainstream funding agencies to alter their spending priorities to reflect the needs of the most disadvantaged in their areas, rather than those which attempted to become broadly-based service providers (ibid.: 10). They note that it was not until 1995- four years after they were first established- that the partnerships began to adopt the former role.³¹ Secondly, the consultants assert that there should be far greater co-ordination of structures and agencies active in the local development arena in Ireland, an observation which may be applied equally to the present development climate.

³⁰ In relation to this point, the report states:

For the [partnerships], the Area Action Plan tended to express a strategic vision within which the day-to-day funding decisions were made; by contrast the [community groups] were often unable to adhere to their original plans as these were soon superseded by group developments after the formulation of the plan. In such cases, the plans were not only of little use to the Group's subsequent work but, at times, resulted in disillusionment about the role of Area Action Plans. That this happened was confirmed by the statements of a number of interviewees who saw the Area Action Plan as just another means by which to draw down funds (ibid.: 7).

In the Community Support Framework 1994-1999, the model of local development pioneered in the PESP partnerships and the Global Grant schemes was extended, both geographically and sectorally, and was incorporated as the main delivery mechanism in the Operational Programme for Local, Urban and Rural Development. Thirty six County Enterprise Boards (CEBs) were created, involving representation from the three sectoral groups along with a small number of county councillors and administered by local authority staff, with a primary focus aimed at complementing the activities of state agencies such as Forbairt and the IDA through the provision of grant-aid and technical support for small and medium-sized enterprises. Additionally, the twelve existing areas of "designated disadvantage" identified under the PESP were augmented by twenty four others (most of which had been involved in the Global Grant programme) and submissions invited for recognition as Partnership Companies (PCs) from suitable groups in each area. The sectoral remit of these new structures was enhanced, so as to incorporate actions involving other target groups as well as the long term unemployed.³²

The PESP and Global Grant initiatives demonstrated to the Government and the European Commission the value of an area-based partnership approach to local development, which is now firmly established as the primary methodology for the facilitation of a substantial proportion of ESF and ERDF spending throughout the country. However, the extent to which the proposals outlined above have been heeded by the Government and EU in the design of subsequent schemes is highly questionable, and is something that will be explored in detail in relation to County Donegal in the following chapters.

³¹ The authors state that:

Even if broadly supported, area-based partnerships are not a panacea for all the ills afflicting various communities throughout Ireland. There is a danger that they could be the 'dumping ground' for all types of programmes aimed at 'difficult-to-place' categories of people (e.g. early school leavers, long-term unemployed, lone parents etc.). Recent developments would suggest that Partnerships are increasingly being given responsibility for the development and delivery of programmes aimed at these groups. Whether they will follow the path of direct delivery, or whether they will concentrate on influencing, integrating and co-ordinating the activities of the mainstream service providers remains the most important question for the future orientation of their work (ibid.: 14).

³² The NESC identifies the principal role of the CEBs and PCs as follows:

...to use a range of integrated actions in the designated areas to improve the chances of the long-term unemployed finding employment or setting up their own businesses to assist those at risk of early school leaving and under-achievement, to enhance the capacity of local social organisations or communities in designated urban and rural areas, to enhance community life and counter social exclusion, and to achieve substantial improvement in the physical environment of the areas concerned (NESC 1994: 85; see also Government of Ireland 1993: 72).

III.5. Connemara West and the FORUM Initiative.

Letterfrack is a small, picturesque village of approximately 1800 people located in a remote, English-speaking area of North West Connemara.³³ The village is dominated by a large Victorian edifice- a former Industrial School- which is home to perhaps the most well-known local development organisation in Ireland. Connemara West was established in late 1971 as a community-owned development body operating within the parish of Ballinakill, an area which includes the villages of Tullycross, Renvyle, Tully, Moyard and Kylemore, along with Letterfrack itself, and emerged from a pre-existing voluntary group formed ten years previously as a local guild of Muintir na Tíre. Through its involvement in a number of EU programmes, and strong relationships developed with State bodies as well as various members of staff at University College Galway (UCG), Connemara West has become internationally famous as a model of what may be achieved through local action and “bottom-up” development.³⁴

The region has a long history of local development activity. The origins of Connemara West can be traced back positively to the 1950s, when a local committee was formed in order to erect a sportsfield and parish hall in the village of Tullycross. These projects, which were completed within two years of an initial public meeting, were financed almost exclusively by contributions from local people and constructed by voluntary labour. Following affiliation to Muintir na Tíre in 1961, the fledgling organisation established a Credit Union, with the primary purpose of raising funds for local development efforts.

The initial formation of Connemara West was prompted by a decision of the local guild of Muintir na Tíre to construct and manage a holiday cottage scheme located at Renvyle. A board of managers was appointed representing the local community, Galway County Council and the Western Region Tourism Organisation,³⁵ who employed a foreman and 12 local craftsmen to

³³ The presence of this Anglicised “pocket” in the heart of the Connemara Gaeltacht can be traced back to an English army barracks located in Clifden until Independence.

³⁴ Publications and citations relating to Connemara West are legion, and lack of space precludes consideration of all but a handful of them here. The account which follows is based largely upon O'Donohue 1992; Bryden and Scott 1990; NESC 1994: 100-102; Commins and Keane 1994; and Curtin 1993. This has been supplemented by an interview conducted by the author with Ann Jack (one of Connemara West's full-time staff) in January 1996, and research carried out by students of the Geography Department at Oxford Brookes University between 1995 and 1998.

³⁵ Now Ireland West Tourism.

undertake the work. Through the efforts of the local parish priest (Fr. Edward Tuffy) over £13,000 was raised via a share-ownership scheme, to which 400 local people subscribed, and with the help of a ten-year bank loan and grants from Bord Fáilte, Galway County Council and the Western Region Tourism Organisation, the cottages were officially opened in March 1974 by the Minister of Transport. The project was highly successful from the beginning, attracting visitors throughout the year, enabling the loan (of £25,000) to be paid off by the early 1980s. Those using the cottages included an American College from Michigan, which rented them from January to May each year and established a "campus" in the area.³⁶ The group's next undertaking was the building of a Teach Ceoil in the village of Tully, with the expressed purpose of reviving the playing of traditional Irish music in the region. This now functions as a training centre for music, ceildh and set dancing, and features regularly on national television (Connemara West 1994: 4). In 1976, the group received the first of its many grants from the then EEC, when it successfully applied (as the West Connemara Community Action Project) for funding under the First European Anti-Poverty Programme (1975-1980). Thirteen projects were grant-aided under this scheme in Ireland, of which three were based in rural areas. Varley (1991a: 61) and Curtin (1997) argue that certain aspects of the initiative as it operated in Ireland were highly radical, in that the alleviation of poverty was often viewed in the context of a wider goal of altering prevailing structures of power and inequality. Varley cites, as examples, the involvement by a group based in west Cork in a campaign to allow salmon fishermen to gain access to new fishing grounds, and the publication of a newsletter by another group highlighting the sale of disused primary schools to non-locals by church authorities. It appears that Connemara West did not participate in this movement, however, with the grant being utilised for purely practical purposes, facilitating the employment of a full-time office secretary and enabling the group to assist various community groups and small enterprises in the area. Another share issue, together with a subvention from the Guinness Workers' Educational Fund and loans from two local families enabled the purchase of the Letterfrack Industrial School building in October 1978, which had closed four years previously. This was converted over the next five years into an Enterprise Centre to house offices and small workshop units.

³⁶ The college has returned every year since this time (Connemara West 1997: 7).

In 1984, Connemara West hosted the first pan-European seminar on Rural Development, on behalf of the Irish Independent Poverty Action Movement. The event attracted delegates from throughout Europe, and the recommendations which emerged from it were submitted to the European Commission as part of the consultation process conducted prior to the announcement of the Second European Anti-Poverty Programme (Poverty 2) in early 1985. In November of that year, Connemara West became one of only three organisations in Ireland to receive funding under this programme, which was utilised to develop a "Community Resource and Education Project" in the area. The purpose of this initiative was to promote training and educational services in North Connemara, to increase awareness among the local population of development issues, and most importantly, to encourage the participation of the community in the planning and management of development projects. The more radical aspects of the first programme were largely absent from Poverty 2: although much emphasis was placed upon participation, multi-sectorality and integrated approaches, these were not linked with any wider efforts to promote lasting structural change (Varley 1991a: 62). In this respect, Poverty 2 heralded a general move towards "supply side" economics in development programmes sponsored by the EU.

The most successful enterprise undertaken by Connemara West during the 1980s was a craft design course, started on a pilot basis in 1982, which later evolved into a programme in furniture design accredited by the RTC in Galway and later, by the National Council for Education Awards. This was officially opened by the Minister of Education in 1987, and led to the development of a small enterprise in furniture making and design which now employs 5 full-time staff. Over 160 people, many of them locals, have graduated from the course since the mid-1980s, and it has developed an international reputation for the high quality and innovative work produced by its students.

In December 1989, Connemara West initiated a major project involving five statutory bodies (FÁS, Galway City and County VECs, Galway County Council and the Western Health Board) aimed at helping various "target groups" in the area, including early school leavers, the elderly and unemployed, women and low income households. Following the submission of an application to the European Commission prepared in conjunction with

Chris Curtin at UCG, who had been involved with the group for a number of years, funding was received under the auspices of the EC Programme for the Economic and Social Integration of the Most Disadvantaged 1989-1994 (Poverty 3). Another organisation ("FORUM") was established with a separate board of management to the parent body consisting of representatives from the five agencies together with nine from the local community. Again, FORUM was only one of three groups in Ireland involved in the programme, the others being a Travellers' education centre in Dublin and an unemployment project based in Limerick City.³⁷ Seven full-time development workers were appointed by FORUM to manage the day-to-day operation of the initiative. In addition to targeted spending, a comprehensive Action Plan was developed by a variety of consultants for a sustainable tourism programme in the region³⁸, which was launched in Clifden in April 1993 by the Minister of Tourism and Trade and a senior member of DGXXII (Enterprise Policy, Business, Tourism and Social Economics). Twelve months later, the organisation again hosted a major European conference, on Rural Social Exclusion, which was attended by a number of representatives of DGXXII and DGXVI (Regional Policy). FORUM also created a rural development network around the country, Irish Rural Link, something which arose from their participation in a similar transnational network established by the European Commission to link together groups involved in Poverty 3. (Irish Rural Link has since become one of the principal organisations involved in the Community Platform³⁹, and represents the most significant voice lobbying for the inclusion of anti-poverty strategies in Government policies relating to rural Ireland).

At the end of the Poverty 3 initiative in 1994, FORUM was awarded substantial grants from the Department of Social Welfare, the EU's PESCA and LEADER programmes, along with various other state agencies. It was also recognised as a PESP partnership in February of that year. This enabled them to continue the projects which had been pursued to that date, and at the time of writing, the organisation continues to flourish.

³⁷ A total of 41 projects were supported across the EU.

³⁸ See Byrne et al 1991; FORUM Ltd. (n.d.); Tubridy 1993.

³⁹ The "Community Platform" (sometimes called the "Third Strand") represents a coalition of various national organisations involved in consultations with the government, lobbying for a greater recognition of poverty and social inclusion in government policies. Other bodies involved include the Community Workers Co-operative, the National Women's Coalition, the National Women's Council of Ireland, the Conference of Religions of Ireland, the Irish Travellers' Rights Movement and the Council for the West.

It will be clear from the above account that the history of Connemara West shares various common elements with that of the Glencolumbkille Co-operative Society discussed in chapter two. The Catholic Church, through the efforts of the local parish priests, was instrumental in the formation of both organisations; both were envisaged as “community-owned” bodies; their activities attracted a high profile nationally and the “stamp” of state approval (witnessed by the visits of Government ministers); and both became reliant upon external aid to undertake development projects. However, whereas the Glencolumbkille group was wound up in 1980, Connemara West has survived. The principal reason for this appears to be rooted in the differing relationships the groups had with state and- later- EU agencies: as Varley (1991b: 49) reminds us, “the state plays a vital role in creating the conditions that community action is likely to flourish”. In contrast to the rather adversarial approach of Fr. McDyer, Connemara West developed a close affinity with the representatives of funding bodies from an early stage, and its management board reflected a nascent partnership structure almost twenty years before the concept came to be recognised as an important mechanism of project delivery in Ireland.

Whether this should be regarded as something positive, however, is a moot point: it may reasonably be argued that Fr. McDyer’s lobbying tactics and his abject refusal to enter into any sort of formal partnership with funding agencies shielded the G.C.S. from being usurped by agents of the state, and his was a more effective and successful organisation in this regard. It certainly attracted a higher profile than did Connemara West prior to its eventual demise. Moreover, in a lucid assessment of FORUM’s activities, Varley and Ruddy (1996) have highlighted the difficulties which the project encountered in attempting to establish a broadly-based coalition for its activities among the local populace. Part of the reason for this was the diverse level of community representation in the region: in a number of parishes, there were no community groups in existence, whilst in others, two or three bodies claimed to represent the area. In the case of the groups with which FORUM worked directly, the overall strategy was to place them upon a more “professional” footing by encouraging them to employ full-time workers, expand the scale of their activities (through the building of community or resource centres, for example) and plan for the long term (*ibid.*: 76 and note 9). However, the authors note that the experience of the groups in this

respect was mixed. Whilst some benefited from interaction with state agencies and the availability of training schemes, "the perception grew in certain quarters that the management of the project reflected the statutory sector's organisational culture rather than that of the community groups" (ibid.: 78). Indeed, O'Donohue's otherwise positive assessment of the history of the organisation concludes with an expression of concern over the continuing decline in the number of people actually involved in running Connemara West as a whole (1993: 20). Varley and Ruddy also suggest that the short-term nature of programmes such as FORUM may actually have a disempowering effect on community groups, creating difficulties which outweigh any benefits which may accrue to them over the life-time of the project, something which they view as a product of the fundamental difference in organisational values and methods between professional and voluntary groups.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, it remains the case that the impact of the activities pursued by Connemara West and FORUM over the past eight years in shaping the policy environment of EU-sponsored local development in Ireland is difficult to overestimate. The organisation has acted as a recruitment ground for a number of individuals who have since gone on to take up high profile posts in national bodies, such as the Community Workers Co-operative and Irish Rural Link, and through its conferences and many research projects and evaluations, has developed a strong relationship with academics and policy-makers throughout the country. Commins and Keane characterise the FORUM initiative as "the most advanced attempt to date to incorporate the main concepts of integrated rural development" (1994: 172), and devote almost three pages of their overview of local development in Ireland to the project (in comparison to only half a page to the Global Grant scheme). Similarly, the evaluation report concludes that the initiative, as one of the largest integrated rural development projects in Ireland, has relevance "for peripheral rural areas in all parts of Ireland, and, indeed, Europe" (Curtin 1993: 42).

⁴⁰ As the authors point out:

Progress in FORUM...has run up against the slow and geographically uneven nature of community action in present-day rural Ireland. One can only suppose that things would have been very different had there been more groups like Connemara West in North West Connemara...Those community groups that make it to the table and can hope to gain the most from partnerships would appear to be those that have some track record of achievement already or that are prepared to accept the disciplines imposed by demands for accelerated capacity and for delivering quickly on potential. A distinct possibility in all this, of course, is that community groups may risk losing some of their autonomy and other special qualities. It can be argued, for instance, that there is a fundamental clash between the 'process of consultation and decision making...broadly based on consensus' (Craig 1994: 90) found in community groups and the sort of command and decision-making structures that characterise large bureaucratically-organised and private and state sector organisations (ibid.: 82).

One could, perhaps, go further, since there is much evidence to suggest that the impact of Connemara West has extended well beyond Ireland's shores. In this respect, Shorthall's assertion that "the Irish response [to area-based development] has remained a *reaction* to EC initiatives rather than a national development of the rationale" (1994: 240, emphasis added) appears to be contradicted by the experience of this body, which, it could be argued, has been *instrumental* in the shaping of EU policies towards local development. As Bryden and Scott have recognised, "their part in [Poverty 2] is a product of steady, coherent contact with the European programme over a number of years, a programme which, to some extent, *has been shaped by local development organisations*" (1990: 121, emphasis added). Given that the group was responsible for hosting two major conferences which were convened in order to develop the framework for both the Poverty 2 and 3 programmes, it seems reasonable to assume that they represented the pre-eminent local development organisation responsible for their administration in Europe. The salience of this assertion is reinforced when it is considered that Connemara West was one of the only "community-owned" bodies involved in the two initiatives: most of the projects located in other European countries were led by local authorities and state agencies. The generation of an area-based, partnership approach to local development in Ireland (and Europe) should not therefore be viewed as a wholesale transfer of policies developed by anonymous bureaucrats in Brussels; rather, it may be argued that it is the product of a process of *dynamic interaction* between the European Commission and local activists "on the ground". Who, exactly, these "local activists" are, however, is a highly pertinent question for the purposes of this study, and is a theme which will be returned to in subsequent chapters.

III.6. LEADER I. 1991-1994.

A general overview of the LEADER programme was provided in chapter one, and the following discussion is therefore intended to complement this by detailing the experience of the Initiative as it operated in Ireland. The account is based largely upon a comprehensive evaluation carried out by Kearney et al (1995), as well as the relevant sections contained in Commins and Keane (1994) and the NESC report on rural development (1994).

Following publication of the Official Communication on LEADER by the

European Commission in March 1991⁴¹, the Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (appointed as the Intermediary Funding Body for the duration of the initiative) invited submissions from interested groups around the country to apply for LEADER status. From thirty-four applications received, sixteen were granted approval to operate as LEADER groups, the programme being officially launched by the Minister of Agriculture in Athlone in January 1992.⁴² Each group was required to submit a “business plan” to the department, which outlined the basis of their spending priorities over the lifetime of the programme. A national network similar to that which operated under the IRD pilot scheme was established, and groups were also encouraged to participate in a transnational LEADER network (AEIDL) created by the European Commission. Whilst the day-to-day administration of the programme was overseen by the Department of Agriculture, a Monitoring Committee was also convened, comprising representatives from each of the groups, government departments, members of the European Commission, the ICTU, the Association of Chambers of Commerce and various voluntary and rural associations. The principal responsibilities of this body were to ensure that the programme was being correctly implemented under the requirements of Irish and EU law, to make any amendments deemed necessary to project appraisal criteria and to propose adjustments in the financial plan agreed between the government and the Commission. It was initially envisaged that LEADER I would end in June 1994, but delays in the distribution of funding led to its extension until December 1994. Some groups continued to grant-aid projects well into 1995.

The administrative operation of the programme was dictated by the Official Communication on LEADER together with eight circulars issued to groups by the Department at various junctures during the life-time of the programme. These dealt with such issues as the nature of projects eligible for grant assistance, communication with the department, financial planning by the groups, and methods of reporting on group activities. Due in part to the rather vague manner in which the original communication had been written, the evolution of the LEADER I initiative in Ireland was characterised largely by a “trial and error” approach, with many of the procedures and rules introduced during the programme emanating from initial queries made by

⁴¹ Commission of the European Communities (1991).

⁴² In practice, the number of groups was actually seventeen, as one LEADER group based in Cork operated as two groups when the programme became operational (Kearney et al 1995:1)

groups on the ground to officials of the Department. These contacts often resulted in subsequent clarificatory enquiries made by the latter to other government departments or to the European Commission (Kearney et al 1995: 46).

In common with most of the other programmes considered in this chapter, LEADER I was delivered through partnership boards established in each area. The average size of the boards was 14 people, with their composition divided between representatives of community groups, the private sector, state agencies and local authorities in an average ratio of 5:4:3:2. There was, however, substantial variability across the groups, with 8 of the 17 groups incorporating representation from only three sectors, including three which had no community appointees on their boards (ibid.: 103). This reflected the lack of formal requirements in relation to the structure of the partnerships: in one case, for example, board membership was based upon a subscription scheme, and in another, the programme was managed entirely by the County Development Office of the local authority. The evaluation notes that there were a number of significant omissions from the boards, most notably in relation to women, "disadvantaged groups" (such as the unemployed) and Trade Unions (ibid.: 107).

Kearney et al describe the relative lack of representation of community groups on many of the LEADER boards as unsatisfactory, and argue that in these cases, the model of development pursued was based upon a "local top-down", rather than a "bottom up" approach:

Since a high level of local participation is one of the hall-marks of a genuine 'bottom-up' approach to development, it is essential that there should be, in addition to the Board of Directors, a separate structure for involving the wider community. Only a few of the groups [three] have confronted this problem (ibid.: 104-5).

The evaluators do, however, characterise as a "major achievement" the inclusion of representatives of major state and semi-state agencies on LEADER boards (ibid.: 105). The agencies involved were (most typically) Forbairt, IDA Ireland, FÁS, Regional Tourism Authorities, Teagasc and VECs. Two of the boards also included representation by the County Manager and Chairman

of the Council. In addition, most of the groups established sub-board level structures dealing with specific issues, such as education and training, agriculture, tourism, small businesses, or fisheries. These had an explicit advisory and/or evaluatory role, and brought in other significant interest groups and expertise. Some groups, particularly those covering an extensive geographical region, also sought to “devolve” their activities by establishing a number of sub-centres which served smaller areas.⁴³ A number of groups benefited from the involvement by local co-operatives, which often provided significant resources to assist in the start-up process, and were also able to draw upon networks of contacts within the community for advice and the generation of project applications. In some rural areas, the involvement of dairying co-operatives, in particular, proved very valuable to LEADER groups, since many of these organisations had been historically important in the initiation of rural development schemes which incorporated a similar “bottom-up” ethic.⁴⁴

Perhaps the most innovative feature of LEADER I in comparison to the other local development schemes considered here was the inclusion of specific measures to encourage the mobilisation of local people to become involved in the development process, through the “animation” and “capacity building” strands of the programme. The report argues that these aspects “have the potential to mark LEADER out as a unique development agency” (ibid.: 46). Whilst these terms were not actually mentioned in the text of the original communication on LEADER, they became important aspects of the groups’ activities, under which potential promoters were trained in such skills as project management, leadership skills and financial planning, for example, and LEADER staff acted as facilitators for community groups by attending meetings and helping to prepare surveys of local needs, or for private entrepreneurs in preparing business plans and applications for funding.⁴⁵ However, the evaluators note that in relation to “animation”, especially, the groups experienced severe difficulties in generating the 50% matching funding required for these types of activities, and much of the budget under this measure remained unspent by the groups (ibid.: 46-7; see also Commins and Keane 1994: 151). Towards the end of the programme, the Department and

⁴³ Commins and Keane cite the Wexford and Clare groups as examples (1994:168).

⁴⁴ See chapter four, section II and section II, above.

⁴⁵ A comprehensive overview of the types of activities pursued in these areas is outline by Kearney et al (1995: 111-117). See also section IV.2 below.

EU acknowledged these difficulties by reducing the percentage to 25%, and under LEADER II, these strands were funded at a 100% rate.

In terms of the actual expenditure by the groups, almost 3,000 individual projects were supported by the groups over the life-time of the programme, receiving an average grant of £13,000 each and creating an estimated 1,445 full-time equivalent jobs (*ibid.*: iii and 57-85).⁴⁶ The bulk of these were supported under the rural tourism measure, which accounted for 51% of total spending, over one-third of which was devoted to tourist accommodation (Bed and Breakfast and Self-Catering).⁴⁷ Two-thirds of the budget was allocated to private project promoters, with the remainder going to the community sector or co-operatives/others. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there was a distinct difference in the model of development pursued by the groups according to whether private sector or community interests dominated membership of the board.⁴⁸

The evaluation report concludes with a highly positive assessment of the LEADER initiative:

...we feel that it has complemented the role of existing agencies and measures in local development, both in relation to the scale of economic and community activity which it has stimulated, and in its area-based theatre of operations. It has lifted the morale and self-confidence of local communities, giving them a role in shaping their own destinies, and provided a degree of autonomy and a 'one-stop shop' service. Much of the sense of involvement could be encapsulated in the word 'empowerment', by which was meant that communities could articulate their own problems, and within the confines of the limited resources available to them, make choices

⁴⁶ The authors do acknowledge, however, that there is probably a significant amount of 'deadweight' in this figure, in that 40% of project promoters indicated that their project would have gone ahead anyway in the absence of grant-aid. They also consider this percentage to be an underestimate.

⁴⁷ This emphasis upon tourism activities was reflected in other European countries. In Spain, for example, a study conducted in 1994 discovered that over two-thirds of the 52 local action groups established under LEADER I were intending to direct the majority of their budgets towards tourism projects (Barke and Newton 1994).

⁴⁸ As the authors make clear:

In some of the groups where the leading partner was the private sector (represented by either the local Chamber of Commerce, a group of local business people, or a large co-operative) the main objectives related to the encouragement of new enterprises and helping existing businesses. Social and community objectives were given a low priority. By contrast, the groups which were community-driven put more emphasis on training and improving the capacity of the community to promote an integrated strategy for the benefits of all inhabitants of the area (*ibid.*: 109).

as to the most appropriate means of energising and sustaining the development of their local communities (ibid.: 128).

In 1994, the European Commission decided to extend the programme for another five years in a relatively unchanged form. In Ireland, the number of groups was increased to thirty four, covering all rural areas in the country. LEADER II has become a central element of the Government's strategy of promoting area-based, "bottom-up" approaches to development, featuring prominently in Chapter Seven of the National Development Plan 1994-1999, and it is likely that the programme will continue in some form when the current round of the Structural Funds ends in December 1999.

At the end of the first round of the Structural Funds in 1993, there were a number of calls made in policy-making and academic circles that the compartmentalised environment of local development in Ireland should be streamlined to avoid confusion and overlap between the plethora of different programmes then in operation.⁴⁹ The fact that this has not occurred, with the structure of development activity becoming, if anything, even more complex, forms one of the principal axes for this study. Undoubtedly, it is a product of the programmatic nature of State and, especially, EU-funded development; however, it is also something that cannot be explained with reference only to structural considerations. The social dynamics which underpin the operation of the development process at local levels are of equal, if not greater importance. As we have noted above, given the articulation of local groups into the national arena of policy-making through the existence of EU programmes and their concomitant national networks, as well as the introduction of partnership arrangements in government policy-making, the evolution of the current environment of local development in Ireland must be viewed in terms of an *interaction* between the locale and the State, rather than as a simple imposition from above. Differences in ideologies, traditions, attitudes, backgrounds and discourse- fundamentally, "culture"- serve to divide different groups (such as voluntary community activists, professional development experts and politicians) from one another and militate against the introduction of a more inclusionary context for local development activity. It is hoped that the four chapters which follow will demonstrate the salience of this observation in relation to County Donegal.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Haase et al (1996); NESC (1994: 116); Commins and Keane (1994: 241); ESRI (1993).

IV. The Discourse of EU Development Planning.

In this chapter, we have provided an overview of local development in Ireland, and demonstrated the institutional context in which EU-sponsored development programming has evolved during the 1990s. In order to draw this chapter together, it is necessary to highlight some of the key themes which emerge from the case studies outlined above.

First of all, it will be clear from the above account that a relatively “neutral” approach has been adopted in my discussion of the various initiatives thus far. It is hoped that this has provided the reader with a sense of the distinctive nature of the rather technocratic discourse which pervades much of the academic and policy-orientated debate on development activity in Ireland. In so much as this is a discourse, however- and therefore can never be neutral- it may be critically analysed in much the same way as the discourses of the various groups which the study overall is focused upon. In this section, we therefore explore a number of significant issues which can be identified in relation to the way language is employed in this literature, which forms an overall backdrop for the rest of this study.

IV.1. The Conception of Development.

Of all the plethora of reports, evaluations, policy documents, submissions, conference proceedings and academic analyses which have emerged over the past decade in relation to EU development programmes in Ireland, some of which we have dealt with here, very few have been concerned with the *social dynamics* which underpins the practice of development at local levels. In fact, the policy debate to which this literature contributes is characterised by a paradigm which is concerned largely with *organisational structures*, rather than *people*, an observation which is somewhat ironic given that the involvement of local actors in decision-making processes forms one of its principal concerns. There is an uncritical assumption underpinning much of this discourse that by altering the structural context in which development activity takes place, then change will automatically follow at some point in the future. Indeed, the dominance of this rather narrow emphasis upon the pursuit of structural solutions is such that it is as though people themselves (and, indeed, society) have been entirely removed from the equation.⁵⁰

Moreover, when local social factors are mentioned, it is usually in the context of discussions concerning alleged weaknesses in the development process. A failure to problematise adequately the relationship between the supposed “level of development” of an area or region and external factors and circumstances too often leads to the “blame” for underdevelopment being attributed entirely to local populations. There is obviously nothing new here, but in as much as EU initiatives are supposed to emphasise the views of local people, their voices are heard surprisingly rarely in this professional discourse of development.

By way of illustration, Kearney et al (1995) in their evaluation of LEADER I reproduce a “stages of development” table, illustrating the key indicators of the social development of a community. The table identifies four “major attributes” of a community- socio-economic base, social infrastructure, institutional capacity, and social coherence- and lists various characteristics of “underdeveloped”, “unevenly developed” and “self-sustaining” areas for each attribute. Thus an underdeveloped community will have “high unemployment and poor quality jobs”, “neglected or non-existing amenities”, “little or no leadership capacity to initiate development” and “a sense of powerlessness”. A self-sustaining area, on the other hand, will be characterised by “full employment”, “well supported amenities”, “widely dispersed capacity to lead, initiate and manage local development” and a “shared sense of development priorities”. If one ignores the difficulty of measuring these “attributes” along with the obvious problems associated with the deterministic conflation of social organisation with levels of development, the table itself may be regarded as relatively uncontentious, in so much as there is no attempt to apportion blame. What is contentious, however, is the manner in which it is used by the authors:

Following Stern (1993), it is possible to summarise some of the key attributes of the social dimension of development and identify how these vary according to the *stage of development which has been achieved by a community....* The attributes listed in the first column might be interpreted as a hierarchy of area goals. The descriptions across the rows indicate where an area might be vis-a-vis particular

⁵⁰ In criticising the approach adopted in many evaluations and research reports, the NESC perceptively notes that:

The design of desirable organisations and structures for the pursuit of rural development cannot ignore the administrative, political and social context within which such structures have to operate (1994: 116).

goals. *Thus, a local area that is internally fragmented and feels a sense of powerlessness relative to outside agencies lacks social coherence.* Creating this local coherence is in turn a precondition for institutional capacity and so on towards higher level goals (1995: 18-19, emphasis added).

The authors talk elsewhere of the “potential problems...of adjusting the prevailing power structures both within a community and the external structures to which it relates” (ibid.: 29). The fact that the word “to” after “adjusting” is conspicuous by its absence highlights the simplistic way in which both the community and the development process is conceptualised: the image is one of the development expert- a LEADER manager, perhaps- being parachuted into a local area and sweeping away those anachronistic facets of local society which are apparently preventing successful development. Nowhere in the report is any mention made of the need to alter practices at a government or state agency level to facilitate a more inclusive and equitable environment for local policy-making. Additionally, the ethnographic record suggests that any attempt to “adjust prevailing power structures” in Ireland, particularly over such a short time-span, is unlikely to succeed.

A further, associated, problem can be identified in relation to the actual model of development characteristic of area-based programmes. A number of commentators have remarked on the fact that, despite the rhetoric surrounding “local empowerment” and “community ownership”, local development programmes operating in Ireland are more often than not “creatures of the centre” (Varley and Ruddy 1996: 74; see also Varley 1991a; Curtin and Varley 1992; Shorthall 1994). In this respect the pilot IRD Programme represents the only initiative to date which has not specified the types of actions to be supported. Usually, the strategic impetus, timetables, target groups, evaluatory criteria, expected outcomes and policy and funding regulations associated with each programme emanate from Dublin or Brussels, and cannot be adjusted to suit different geographical conditions in anything but a very limited manner during the life-time of an initiative. In this situation, the role of local people is reduced to simply interpreting procedures rather than undertaking strategic planning for the development of their areas, something compounded by the pressure placed upon them to ensure that

their budgetary allocation is spent before the programme ends.⁵¹ A related concern is the extent to which all of these initiatives can actually claim to be involving “local people” in their administrative arrangements, and creating a delivery method surrounding broadly-based participation in the development process. As noted above, even with such high-profile initiatives such as LEADER and the FORUM project, whose very *raison d’être* centres upon an “inclusionary” strategy, the implementation of this objective, apparently so simple on paper, appears to be rather less straightforward in reality.

IV.2. Development Labelling: Towards a Framework for Analysis.

The relationship between rhetoric and experience is a central aspect of this study, and in this respect, the way in which various key terms (or “development labels”) are used in the discourse of professional development planning forms one of its primary concerns. As was described in chapter one, development anthropologists working outside Europe have stressed the general lack of meaning associated with bureaucratic policy-making. The significance of terms and phrases such as “Integrated Rural Development”, “Animation and Capacity Building”, “Participation”, “Hardware and Software”, along with numerous others, is derived principally from the way in which they are used- as a bureaucratic “veneer”- rather than in describing the reality of the development process. The general lack of concern with the social dynamics of Irish rural life, identifiable in the literature under scrutiny here, suggests that similar conclusions can be drawn from the way this discourse is now employed in Ireland.

Take the term “innovation”, for example. “Innovation” was identified as one of the most important elements of the LEADER I programme, and has been carried forward into LEADER II. The Official Communication issued

⁵¹ As Crickley points out,

..the voluntary and community sector needs vertical and horizontal partnerships, that is structured access to and partnership with regional, national and EU policymakers if progress made through local partnerships is to have long term and policy effects. Otherwise they become confined to implementing locally decisions which have been made elsewhere (1996: 25).

This echoes a similar point made by Shorthall:

It is argued that the *raison d’être* for community development has been disingenuously presented as one of empowerment, and a more accurate description is the failure of centralised policy planning to stimulate development, the reduced costs of utilising voluntary community labour, and reduced government responsibility for the success of development initiatives, given increased community ownership of development projects. In addition, doubts have been expressed about the extent to which community empowerment or community development is possible without a reorganisation of systems of governance and power (1994: 246-247).

by the European Commission stated that "the objective of Initiative is to find innovative solutions which will serve as a model for all rural areas".⁵² What "innovative solutions" actually means in this context is difficult to judge, however. Kearney et al argue that the concept should be viewed in terms of "process" as well as "product", and contend that the way LEADER has been applied in Ireland- with an emphasis upon "animation", "capacity building" and "partnership" (themselves rather problematic terms)- is in itself innovative. In other words, innovation can be viewed from a structural or social perspective, as well as an economic one:

Groups were inclined to think of 'innovation' exclusively in terms of its product dimension and naturally, in this very narrow sense, only a tiny fraction of projects in any area would fit this requirement. It might have been a help to Groups if the concept had been fleshed out a little more in the Official Communication. Rather than Groups considering 'innovation' in terms of private goods, it might have been more useful to specify the concept in terms of public goods...The structures that have been established in many of the areas along with the animation function represent a new approach to rural development. This has enabled such groups to clearly distinguish themselves from the traditional development agency with its emphasis on grant-giving. We would be of the view that those Groups which developed innovative 'structures' also produced innovative public goods (ibid.: 125).

The potential for misinterpretation, even across the literature, is manifest, however. In a review of LEADER I based, the authors state, on the above evaluation⁵³, the NESC see innovation in rather different terms:

The LEADER programme is an alternative development model. If programmes such as LEADER are to be worthwhile, they must make some distinctive contribution to development. In order to minimise the problems of deadweight and displacement, there should be greater emphasis on innovation and integration-where

⁵² Commission of the European Communities 1992: 3.

⁵³ It will be noted that the NESC report was published prior to the Kearney et al investigation. However, the latter is cited in the bibliography of the former (with a date of 1994), and similar views on the meaning of innovation were also contained in an Interim Report prepared by the same evaluation team in 1993 (Kearney et al 1993: 31-33).

innovation refers to the identification and initiation of economic activities which are not occurring already" (Commins and Keane 1994: 83, emphasis added).

These authors therefore use exactly the same "narrow" understanding of the term explicitly rejected by the evaluation they cite in their own discussion! If professional evaluators are confused over the meaning of the term, then it seems reasonable to assume that such confusion is reflected at local levels, particularly as this semantic uncertainty appears to have been repeated in the guidelines for LEADER II.⁵⁴ The initial memorandum issued by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Food in early 1994 stated that the programme will support:

Innovative investment programmes that can serve as models and are transferable, promoted either by local action groups organizing [sic] an integrated project following the LEADER I model (the geographic approach), or by other public or private collective bodies operating in one or more sectors (a more sectoral approach), but also as part of a local development plan. The concept of innovation is to be understood in a broad sense and will be adapted to the specific context in each case (in relation to the type of area and the content of the CSF rural development programme), although a basic minimum of innovation must be demonstrated in all cases (Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Foods 1994: 2).

Moreover, if one accepts an economic definition, the emphasis upon an "innovative" approach necessarily assumes that there exists, in rural Ireland, a latent store of entrepreneurial capacity waiting to be harnessed. Given the fact that the largest percentage of the total budget for LEADER I was directed towards tourist accommodation projects- which could hardly be described as innovative- this would appear to be a very bold assumption to make, and brings into question the extent to which this characteristic was truly representative of the programme as a whole. Furthermore, the requirement for private matching funding, a fundamental aspect of all EU-sponsored development programmes, immediately restricts the category of potential entrepreneurs to those who have ready access to capital upon which to

⁵⁴ The evaluation notes that , during LEADER I, many of the groups were unsure as to the methods of identifying "innovation" in project initiatives.

draw.

Innovation in relation to strategy seems a more plausible argument, and it is certainly the case that the introduction of partnership arrangements at local levels in Ireland since the late 1980s represents a genuinely new methodology of development administration. Approaches which emphasise a “balance” between state-led interventions in the development process and those emanating directly from the locale have arisen from a recognition in Ireland (and Europe) that neither “top down” nor “bottom up” models are sufficient in their own right to realise lasting solutions to the problems of underdevelopment. The current predilection for partnership therefore represents a manifestation of this compromise, and partly explains why it has become the principal strategy governing EU-led development in Ireland and “the main influence on community development in [the 1990s]” (Crickley 1996: 21). Again, however, this conveniently positive term may also be used to disguise the reality of what “partnership” actually means when played out “on the ground”⁵⁵, particularly when it is used- as it typically is- in conjunction with another equally positive term, that of “community”.

The usual tripartite arrangement bringing together a range of actors from state agencies, “Social Partners” (trade unions and employers) and the “community sector” would appear to have much to commend it in the abstract, allowing the representation of a diverse range of local interest groups committed to the promotion of an integrated and multi-sectoral response to development practice within a confined geographical area. It is not a panacea, however, and nor is it a simple remedy. There are a number of problems associated with an approach which relies on what might be termed a “compartmentalised objectification” of the development process, surrounding the degree of representation, and the nature of that representation, which each actor is able to bring to a partnership board. A situation in which a small handful of people is charged with the task of voicing the concerns, opinions and aspirations of a necessarily heterogeneous range of different organisations and individuals involved in development within any given area is clearly unsatisfactory unless external fora, conducive to a system of democratic agency, are established in addition to the main partnership structure.⁵⁶ In relation to the “community sector”, this observation would

⁵⁵ Crickley (1996: 21) describes partnership as a “magical and unknown word”.

appear to have particular salience, not least because of the imprecise way the term is defined. However, in the context of the Irish and EU policy-making arena, a recognition of this need is masked by an often unwarranted conflation of representation and role. There is a distinct assumption shared across much of this discourse that “the community” represents the embodiment of a set of values which are necessarily opposed to those held by the State or the private sector. Suggested examples here would include a reliance upon voluntarism, an emphasis upon the social aspects of development activity, a sensitivity to the local environment, an awareness of the needs of disadvantaged sectors of society (and usually an associated equation with poverty⁵⁷), and commitment to activities borne out of collective decision-making. The quotation from Kearney et al reproduced above (page 92) represents a salient example of this general tendency, and is by no means an isolated example. The National Development Plan 1994-1999, for instance, uses a similarly hazy definition of community. Chapter Seven, which is concerned with local development, begins with the statement: “The Government recognises the importance of a local dimension to enterprise and employment creation and the importance of developing the capabilities of local communities to tackling unemployment and pursuing local development”. It goes on,

The development of infrastructure at local level to promote growth in both enterprise and broader community-led initiatives is therefore a key task. It involves empowering communities to sponsor innovative projects for training, enterprise and local development as well as enabling them to focus mainstream programmes for the unemployed in a better way in their local areas (1993: 69).

Other examples can be found in almost every policy document related to local development in Ireland, and indeed, Europe. To a certain extent, the national Community Platform itself has been equally culpable in assuming that involvement by the “community” will *always* bring a poverty-focused dimension to development programmes. Hugh Frazer, the Director of the

⁵⁶ In this, I am reflecting the views of Kearney et al (see the quotation reproduced above on page 92), along with Black and Conway (1995), who draw similar conclusions in relation to their observations of the Lochaber and Western Isles LEADER I programmes in Scotland. As will be seen in the following chapter, this point is highly pertinent to the experience of the LEADER II programme in Donegal.

⁵⁷ Colm Breathnach (1998) has provided a lucid overview of this equation of poverty with “community” in professional discourse.

...community development must be an integral part of any effective local development programme if it is to successfully address issues of poverty and social exclusion....While provision may have been made in the text of the local development programme providing for community involvement and supporting community development many indeed, perhaps the majority of policy makers, deliverers of services and social partners remain to be convinced. They do not understand the nature of social exclusion and remain highly sceptical about the emphasis on empowerment (1996: 43).

The problematic equation of poverty with community is obvious in this passage. In this conception, if a person is labelled as a "community representative" (or describes themselves as such) for the purposes of participating in a partnership board, then this is usually enough to complete the triumvirate: hence the term "participative democracy" which has recently entered the lexicon of development planning in Ireland.⁵⁸ It might be suggested, however, that this notion is premised on a highly abstract model of community, in which the phenomenon is imagined as a kind of socially-homogenous, egalitarian and impoverished commune in which everyone acts in the best interests of everyone else and all members have an equal voice and opportunity to participate in the development process. Apart from deriving from an uncritical acceptance of the dictionary definition of the term, there is absolutely no *a priori* reason why the community should be considered in this way; indeed, there are a number of very good reasons why it should not. If the concept has any relationship to the realities of local social organisation in Ireland, this surely must rest upon a recognition of its multifarious nature. However, the fact that local social organisation is usually ignored in professional discourse through its subsumption under a conveniently positive umbrella term means that the one area which is so crucial to the success or otherwise of area-based development programmes is entirely missing from the policy-making debate.

⁵⁸ As O'Carroll (1985) has pointed out, there is a often a distinct tendency in "community-focused" programmes to equate general participation with the involvement of a small number of community representatives in decision-making structures.

V. Conclusions.

In this chapter, I have considered the historical context in which local development in Ireland has evolved over the course of the century. A major theme running throughout the discussion has been the interconnectedness of the state and the locale, and I have argued that the sustainability of local development movements has been largely dictated by the general attitude to the state towards them. In recent years, the EU has become the principal actor in the development process, creating a policy-making environment which has facilitated the involvement of local people in development planning and administration. This has replaced the rather adversarial approach which characterised relations between local community groups and the state during the 1960s and 1970s. In criticising the discourse which underpins much of the policy-orientated literature relating to EU programmes in Ireland, however, it has been noted how a lack of concern with local social organisation introduces a number of important questions surrounding the broad relationship between rhetoric and experience. It has further been suggested that the use of "development labelling" acts in such a way as to shroud the reality of the development process in what has been termed a "bureaucratic veneer".

One of the primary aims of this chapter has been to explore in detail the parallels between the indigenous ideology of development in Ireland and that which underpins the model recently introduced by the EU. That there are parallels, there is no question. Local level structures such as those established by Muintir na Tíre and the Gaeltacht co-operatives have numerous similarities to the LEADER groups and Partnership Companies of the present day, and in many cases (perhaps most saliently exemplified by Connemara West), the same organisations are involved in both administrative regimes. Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest (which we have briefly hinted at here), that local groups in Ireland have been influential in shaping the ethos of development promoted by the EU; it would certainly be nice to think that the systems of mutual aid in the West of Ireland, manifested in such practices as Meithal and Cooring and documented by Arensberg and Kimball and a number of their successors, have somehow been responsible for introduction of "bottom-up" development strategies across the Continent.⁵⁹ This seems too "neat" a theory, however, and is ultimately impossible to prove in any

rigorous manner. Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly the case that EU programmes have tapped into an ethic of voluntarism which is interwoven into the fabric of Irish rural life, and in this respect, they represent a modern-day extension of a centuries-old tradition.⁶⁰

What I wish to explore over the coming chapters is the practical dimensions to the implementation of the EU's model in local areas, and, specifically, the point of its intersection with local society, something largely ignored in the literature to date. To talk of "local society" is not to reduce the phenomenon to some simplistic and unitary category: it is composed of many competing influences which serve to belie any attempts at an holistic or all-encompassing definition. In one sense, therefore, the rather anodyne conception of "community" utilised by the EU and the Irish government today is a throw-back to the functionalist construction of the term so eloquently described by the early scholars of Irish anthropology. The similarities between Arensberg and Kimball's portrayal of an ahistorical, self-regulating and organic community in west Clare in the 1930s and the apparently bounded and tangible entity which emerges from the pages of EU documents are manifest, and in the sense that both tend towards a reductionist categorisation of society, may be criticised on identical grounds.⁶¹

The next four chapters of this study will attempt to "bring people back in" to the literature on Irish development by demonstrating the social and political interplay between the three principal groups involved in development activity

⁵⁹ According to John Loughlin, Professor of European Studies at the University of Wales, the Global Grant for Local Development was envisaged by the EU as a pilot for the LEADER I programme, Ireland being chosen as the location because of its long history of local development activity. (Personal communication).

⁶⁰ In the view of Salazar, Cooring (the tradition of mutual co-operation in agricultural work) remains prevalent among the farming community he studied in eastern Galway, an observation which contradicts the findings of those ethnographers who have chosen to emphasise the "decline of the west" (exemplified, most obviously, by Hugh Brody's monograph *Inishkillane*). In a highly perceptive passage, he states that:

It is a pity that so many good anthropologists working in the west of Ireland and elsewhere in Europe have been so naively haunted by the 'crave for the primitive', not realising that some of the institutions they recorded as already extinguished in their ghost villages could still be seen thriving in more 'modernised' communities (1996: 89, in footnote).

His account demonstrates that there are essentially two types of parallel economies operating in Galway, one based upon the "commodification" of agriculture, and the other, a "moral economy" existing on the basis of mutual exchange. The data contained in this study support Salazar's views. The community groups that we have considered in this chapter, such as Connemara West, and those that we will be introducing in chapters five and six, may be viewed as expressions of this "moral economy", and legitimate inheritors of the rural traditions that many anthropologists assume to have long since disappeared.

⁶¹ Thus Gibbon's perceptive observations on the depiction of community in *Family and Community in Ireland* could apply equally to the EU programmes of today:

The problem with "real" communities is that they are never actually observed- they are always (coincidentally) going out of existence. It is disputable whether the "real" Ireland of the nativists, revivalists and Arensberg and Kimball ever existed *anywhere* in Ireland, in fact (1974: 486, emphasis in original).

in County Donegal. The emphasis will be upon the social nexus in which each group operates, which serves to mould perceptions of the development process and reify the EU's model. In so doing, I hope to illustrate the fact that development itself represents a highly contested social arena which cannot be reduced to simple labels such as those I have described here, and thereby add a modicum of colour to the somewhat monochromatic conception of development discussed thus far.

Chapter Four.

The Professional Development Sector.

I. Introduction.

With a population of some 15,000 inhabitants, Letterkenny is the largest urban centre in Donegal, and the location for the headquarters of most of the principal development agencies in the county. Our focus in this chapter will be upon these organisations and the people who work within them, which I have grouped together and labelled as the “Professional Development Sector”. To the public, and most academics, it is this sector which perhaps most readily constitutes the “visible face” of development in Ireland as a whole, and is the area which most studies of development activity have focused upon. It is also the most significant medium through which localities are linked to wider national and global structures and influences. Four distinctive categories can be identified as the constituent elements of this sector in Donegal: EU grant-making bodies, non-EU grant making bodies, specific interest groups and the County Council executive. The division is by no means an artificial one, since it is informed both by the structuring of development activity in the county as well as the distinctive social context which underpins the nature of work characteristic of each of the four sectoral ambits. The concern of this chapter will be largely with the first and third of these groups, as they are most strongly associated with EU programmes.

Despite the fact that the professional sector as a whole does not operate as a distinctive corporate group, it may be contrasted to the two other principal development sectors in the county, encompassing those who are involved in development as elected representatives (chapter seven) or voluntary activists (chapter five and six). There is some overlap with the latter group, however, in that our focus includes the management boards of EU programmes and other development agencies, some of whose members are involved as representatives of community groups, as well as the professional employees of such organisations.

As I have highlighted previously, one of the principal characteristics of the way Irish local development is organised in the late 1990s is the existence of

a plethora of state, semi-state, EU and private agencies, marked by a substantial degree of overlap and duplication between their various areas of operation. The programmatic nature of state and EU funding is thus one explanation for the fragmentation of development activity on the ground. However, there is also a highly significant *social* dimension to this, which is articulated through the differing interpretation of the meaning and purpose of development proffered by each of the groups involved in professional development activity. By way of reminder, the principal focus of this study is on discourse, and of specific interest (in view of the subject-matter under scrutiny here) is the way in which the language of EU development planning is translated and utilised at local levels. As was shown in chapter three, the philosophy of EU development is organised around a small number of key terms, which I have identified as “subsidiarity”, “partnership”, “social exclusion” and “community”. The purpose of this chapter, then, is to highlight the ways in which these concepts are understood, negotiated, managed, altered, reified and put into practice in County Donegal by those involved in EU programmes, either as distributors or recipients of grant-aid. Drawing from data derived from extended interviews and participant observation among the professional development sector, the power of these four terms as *symbolic blueprints for social action* will be demonstrated. In this way, we also aim to explore the way in which the implementation of the EU’s development philosophy is serving simultaneously to *alter* and *reinforce* structures of vested interest and power in Donegal.

The chapter is composed of six sections. The first provides an overview of the way professional development activity is structured in the east of the county, with an emphasis upon the relationship of the local authority to development agencies. I then turn to consider the role of sectoral interest groups in Letterkenny in the development process, utilising a case study drawn from a meeting of the Donegal Community Workers Co-operative to highlight their relationship to the wider bureaucratic environment. In focusing upon one of the principal EU grant-aiding bodies in Donegal- the Donegal Local Development Company- in sections IV and V , the aim is to demonstrate the implementation and experience of the LEADER II and Local Development Programmes in the east of the county, and the local interpretation of the model of development as derived from the EU. The data presented in the chapter are then drawn together in a concluding discussion.

II. Development in County Donegal: Structural Considerations.

II.1. Overview: Development Agencies and the Local Authority.

The organisation of development activity in County Donegal largely reflects its structuring at State and EU-level, with programmes belonging to two distinctive categories reflecting their relative status as, on the one hand, national initiatives developed in consultation between the EU and the Irish government, or pan-European programmes originating in the European Commission, on the other. The former are normally part of the eleven Operational Programmes which together constitute the second Community Support Framework 1994-1999. Other programmes, termed Community Initiatives, are developed by the European Commission in consultation with member states en bloc, and, whilst their day-to-day operation is overseen by national governments, the rules and regulations which govern their operation vary little between countries.¹

The major concern of the various bodies which have been established to facilitate EU development activity in Donegal is the distribution of grants and/or loans, although some of them do have a number of other roles in addition to the provision of financial assistance.² The target groups of each body vary according to the nature of the development programme that they are involved with, but, generally speaking, the major beneficiaries are community and voluntary groups, private entrepreneurs, the local authority, other development agencies, or, most usually, a combination of each sector.

In contrast to the way in which development occurs in Northern Ireland and in most other countries in the EU³, local authorities in the Republic are relatively insignificant as far as the *organisation* of the process at local levels is concerned. This reflects the relative status of Irish local government: although they exert by far the largest spending power on the ground, the

¹ A full list of the Operational Programmes and Community Initiatives is provided in Appendix Two and Appendix Three.

² Examples here would include training, mentoring programmes, facilitation provision, advice for business start-ups and the promotion of networking arrangements between companies or community groups.

³ A comprehensive analysis of the response of local authorities in the U.K. to European Integration and the completion of the Single market has been provided by Martin (1993). He asserts that

Many local authorities already play an important part in facilitating local economic development using EC assistance...They will also frequently take the lead in co-ordinating applications for EC assistance and lobbying both national government and the Commission in order to influence decisions regarding legislation and future funding (1993: 155).

power of county councils is extremely weak in comparison to that of other European countries, with their functions restricted to a narrow range of activities surrounding public planning, and infrastructure and housing provision. They have no role in public transport, policing, social services and only a marginal involvement in health care and education services (Government of Ireland 1996: 7; Coyle 1996: 280-281).⁴ They have also been largely by-passed by the new structures which have emerged in recent years to facilitate the administration of EU funding in the country. Whilst eleven elected members of Donegal County Council are involved in the delivery of two sub-programmes of an important local development initiative sponsored by the EU (namely the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, a Community Initiative established by the EU in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties following the first IRA cease-fire in 1994), the projects which have been pursued under this programme lie firmly within the sphere of infrastructure development. It is managed by the local authority through a separate committee (the Donegal Task Force for Peace and Reconciliation), established by the government in each border county in consultation with the EU. Although councillors constitute the most significant numerical bloc on this board of 26 people, the fact that money allocated by the Task Force is used to match that derived from other sources (principally from the local authority itself and from the International Fund for Ireland) rather than for the purposes of distributing individual grants, means that the power of councillors to influence the allocation of funds is relatively small.⁵ Furthermore, whilst one of the main purposes of this body is to bring MCCs together with the chairpersons of other development agencies in Donegal, councillors essentially view it as an extension to the council's own bureaucracy. Indeed, attendance at the meetings of the committee is regarded as council business, and may be included in expenses claims.

The only other development body which includes councillors in its administrative arrangements is the County Enterprise Board. Four councillors,

⁴ The Irish local government system has, in fact, altered little since it was established by a British Act of Parliament in 1898, which passed control of local services from the land-holding class (who were responsible, via Grand Juries, for the provision of public roads and buildings and the payment of county officers) to elected county councillors (Chubb 1992: 269; Coyle 1996: 278). It is notable that the wording of the letter which is sent out each month with the minutes of council meetings to councillors in Donegal has changed remarkably little over the past century. In 1899, the passage read:

Sir, I hereby give you notice that you are required to attend the first meeting of the County Council of the County of Donegal, which will be held in the Grand Jury Room in the County Courthouse, Lifford, on Saturday the 22nd. April 1899 at the hour of 12 o'clock noon (cited in Maguire 1995[1917]: 70).

By 1995, the only change had been in relation to the location of meetings (which are now held in the Council Chambers in Lifford), and the removal of the word "Sir".

⁵ A list of grants distributed by the Task Force is provided in Appendix Seven.

representing the three main parties in the county (two from Fianna Fáil, and one each from Fine Gael and Independent Fianna Fáil) are nominated annually by the council membership to sit on this committee of twenty two people.

Other EU agencies operating outside the local authority's control do not include any councillors on their boards of management, a quite deliberate policy on behalf of existing board members and a probable source of the division between the political and developmental sectors in the county. (See below, section III.3).⁶ These other bodies are known as the LEADER and Partnership Groups, which are actually operated essentially as private-sector organisations, limited by guarantee. There are five such companies in Donegal, namely the Donegal Local Development Company Ltd. (DLDC), Inishowen Rural Development Ltd. (IRDL), Meitheal Forbatha na Gaeltachta (MFG), the Island LEADER Group and the Inishowen Partnership Company (IPC). The first three are responsible for the administration of the EU's LEADER II Community Initiative, and sub-programme 2 in the Operational Programme for Local, Urban and Rural Development, which has the somewhat clumsy title of "The Integrated Development of Designated Disadvantaged and Other Areas", usually shortened to the Local Development Programme (LDP).⁷ (The Inishowen Partnership Company is involved in the latter programme only).⁸ Each of these five organisations operates autonomously, employing its own teams of staff and managed by a separate board of directors. The elements of the Peace and Reconciliation Programme which do not fall under the rubric of the local authority, constituting the vast majority of measures contained within its seven sub-programmes, are administered jointly by two national organisations, namely the Combat Poverty Agency and Area Development Management Ltd.⁹ The programme as a whole is overseen by regional boards of management and a national monitoring committee.¹⁰

In addition to these organisations, there are many other autonomous, state and semi-state grant-aiding and training bodies in the county which are similarly removed from the ambit of the local authority. As well as the

⁶ This is a general characteristic of area-based development in Ireland (Varley and Ruddy 1996: 81).

⁷ This programme is also known popularly as the "Partnership Programme". In the interests of space, it will be referred to by its acronym (i.e. LDP) throughout this study.

⁸ MFG and the Islands LEADER Group are pan-national organisations, covering, respectively, all Gaeltacht areas and inhabited off-shore islands in the country.

⁹ ADM Ltd. is also responsible for the Local Development Programme.

¹⁰ The various EU programmes are summarised in Appendix Five.

International Fund for Ireland¹¹, these include FÁS, IDA Ireland, the National Rehabilitation Board, Bord Fáilte, Forbairt and Teagasc¹², as well as government departments such as the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Social Welfare. All of these organisations are involved in some way with EU initiatives and regulations, many of them being responsible for the delivery of various elements of the Operational Programmes. (See Appendix Two). It is therefore extremely difficult to delineate precisely the boundaries between indigenous policy initiatives and those deriving from the EU: through the CSF, the Irish development strategy is welded so absolutely to that of the Commission and the Structural Fund instruments, that, in reality, there is little to be gained in attempting to identify the point at which EU influence ends and a purely Irish polity begins.

This overview indicates the extent to which the local authority is removed, in structural terms, from the local development process in County Donegal, and serves as a partial explanation for the basis of the fragmentation of development activity. However, it is necessary to discriminate strongly between the executive and elected arenas of Donegal County Council. The County Manager is, in fact, the key figure in the process, serving on numerous committees and operating as a conduit between the various disparate groups: he, alone, is the one person who has an overview of development as a whole in the county, and it is his strategy which is currently providing much of the impetus for co-ordination between individuals, at least on an agency level.¹³ With regards to the elected sector, the picture is rather different. Councillors are often not aware of the purposes of all the various groups (or of their existence in many cases), and one councillor even claimed to me that four of his colleagues who represent the council on the County Enterprise Board deliberately withhold information from the other members of the council for the purposes of political advantage. (We will return to this issue in chapter seven).

¹¹ In terms of level of funding, the IFI is a highly significant development agency. It was established as a result of the Anglo-Irish agreement of 1985, and is supported through contributions from the EU along with the governments of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States.

¹² The various roles of each of these agencies are outlined in the glossary.

¹³ It is notable that Donegal was chosen as pilot county in 1997 for government plans to devolve local authority services by creating "one-stop shops" (see Government of Ireland 1996: 36-37).

Agency-led development in Donegal is beset by a profound tension which tends to militate against a more strategic and inclusive approach towards development planning. As we have seen, all funding from the government and the EU is channelled through a welter of state and EU programmes. Each of these programmes employs different administrative systems, overseeing authorities, policy actions, target groups, funding regulations and expected outcomes; in other words, each is associated with a distinctive bureaucratic “culture”. One of the effects of this is to orientate those individuals responsible for their implementation on the ground towards Dublin, Belfast and Brussels, for example, and away from their counterparts working in the development sector in Donegal.¹⁴ This is not to suggest that professional employees are in contact with bodies outside the county more regularly than other agencies within it- indeed, the contrary is very much the case- but simply that, in terms of the day-to-day management of the various programmes, each is working within a set of structures which have been developed with reference to the administration of a particular initiative nationally or Europe-wide, rather than with reference to Donegal itself. In relation to grant-aid, for example, the regulations developed in Dublin and/or Brussels which govern the distribution of funding are invariably rigid, and cannot be altered to suit local conditions in anything but the most limited manner. However, because these regulations vary enormously between programmes, it is extremely difficult for agencies to develop any collective strategies towards development planning, or to pool their resources in any way.

In over thirty interviews conducted with officials from all grant-aiding bodies in the county¹⁵, I was invariably treated to a comprehensive overview of the structure of each organisation nationally prior to any discussion of development within Donegal itself. Furthermore, most interviewees stressed the degree of autonomy that their organisation enjoyed, something which, they contended, allowed them a greater level of independence and flexibility of action than other bodies operating in the county. Although most also highlighted the difficulties which the plethora of development agencies has

¹⁴ To use an analogy, development in Ireland may be thought of as being akin to a bicycle wheel, in which each spoke represents a particular funding channel (or relationship) between the “centre” (the hub of the wheel) and the “periphery” (the outer rim).

¹⁵ A full list of these is provided in Appendix Seven.

caused in Donegal, in terms of the degree of overlap between their various activities, administrative duplication, confusion for potential applicants and lack of strategic planning, they saw this essentially as “someone else’s problem”. And the fact that their livelihood is dependent upon the continued existence of the particular organisation that employs them, any action which might ultimately threaten this is unlikely to be pursued.¹⁶ Indeed, many interviewees regarded professional development as a somewhat precarious occupation, citing the short duration of most programmes and the fact that they are usually employed by boards of local volunteers who may not view the process in the same terms as themselves. It is therefore entirely logical that employees of development agencies should undertake strategies aimed at maximising the autonomy of their own organisation, and develop linkages with funding agencies outside the county. In the words of a development officer of an EU agency, for example:

There’s no career path with community development. You’re just hoping another EU programme will start and you can get a job on that. You spend all your time just following the money.

Having said this, there are, in fact, a number of structures in existence in the county which are designed to promote a synergetic approach to development. Most notable in this respect are the County Strategy Group¹⁷, the County Enterprise Board and the three Partnership Companies, all of which bring together representatives from government departments, development agencies, social partners and (in the case of the latter) community groups. In addition, the requirement for matching funding means that most projects, promoted either by private entrepreneurs or voluntary organisations, involve more than one agency.¹⁸ Furthermore, the principle of partnership, to which a number of those agencies involved in administering Community Initiatives and various elements of the CSF subscribe, has given rise to a situation in which a relatively small group of people are involved in the management boards of the most significant grant-aiding bodies. Their employees, similarly,

¹⁶ This point will be discussed further with reference to Local Government Reform in Chapter Eight.

¹⁷ County Strategy Groups were established in each county in Ireland by the government in 1995. They are funded jointly by all principal development agencies, which in Donegal, includes the Partnership and LEADER companies, the County Enterprise Board, Forbairt, the IFI and IDA Ireland.

¹⁸ Whilst EU programmes cannot match grant-aid sourced from other EU initiatives, the IFI incorporates various measures targeted at community groups which may be used to match EU funds, and in certain cases, local authority and CEB allocations may also be employed to aid specific EU-promoted projects. Perhaps the most extreme example of this type of multiple funding is a community owned tourism project located in the Poisoned Glen at Dunlewey in the west of the county, which has been grant-aided by Udarás na Gaeltachta, the IFI, Bord Fáilte, Roinn na Gaeltachta, the County Enterprise Board, FAS, the Electricity Supply Board and MFG LEADER.

form a distinct social group within the development arena in the county. Individuals involved in this sector attend each other's meetings, sit on each other's boards, are in regular contact by telephone and know each other well on a personal level: linkages therefore *do* exist between them and co-operation *does* take place. This is, however, something that is tempered by firstly, a desire on the part of individual agencies to retain their operational independence from other bodies, and secondly, by the much stronger ties they have with their respective overseeing authorities or national networks¹⁹ outside the county.

The following is an extract from an interview conducted with the manager of one of the partnership companies in Donegal, and serves to illustrate these important points:

PC: How much autonomy do you have in terms of what you actually do? I mean, do your decisions have to be ratified by the ADM company in Dublin?

--: Well, they would have ratified our original plan of action, which was submitted on behalf of the [area] here, and they would have approved the content of it and would have questioned areas of it. And then when they have approved the plan and allocated the budget...they still have control of the budget because the money is split between the ERDF and the ESF, 52% to 48% with the emphasis on the ERDF side, so you have to make sure that you spend 52% of your budget on that area, whether you like it or not. So there is control from Dublin. In fact, everything you do is controlled from Dublin, they will question every action, even though they have approved your plan. Every action that you actually do, they have a say. A support liaison officer [from ADM] attends all our board meetings, and is in constant contact and always there looking at our decisions.

In another interview, this particular individual expanded on the role of ADM:

¹⁹ All LEADER and Partnership companies in Donegal are members of either the Irish LEADER network or PLANET, the network of the thirty eight LDP-funded partnerships.

All that concerns them is that you are spending the money. You get phone calls where they'll say 'you've only drawn down 20% of your budget allocation, why is this?'. They've already said that if we don't spend this year's allocation by next April, our budget will be withheld for next year. I suppose it's not really their fault: they're under pressure from the EU. But they're always on at you about something. Just last week, the ADM officer had a go at us for not having enough EU logos around the place, and on our literature. I don't know what they expect us to do- we've already got it on our letterheads and brochures- tattoo it to our foreheads?²⁰

II.3. The Implications of Fragmentation.

To potential applicants for funding, the sheer number of organisations operating on the ground presents a highly confusing picture, something compounded by the overlapping nature of their various activities.²¹ Indeed, in terms of the relative levels of knowledge concerning these structures, and information about EU funding activities in general, the gulf between those involved with development agencies and the wider public is so vast that it

²⁰ In relation to this comment, the Integrated Local Development Handbook details the types of actions that partnerships should undertake in order to comply with the regulations concerning EU publicity. These involve:

(i) Inclusion of the EU logo and statement that the partnership/community group is supported under the Operational Programme for Local, Urban and Rural Development in the following material:

-Letterhead of the Partnership/community group

-Advertisements made on behalf of the Partnership/community group.

-Publicity/information materials published.

-Forms of applications for schemes, etc. operated by the Partnership/ community group.

(ii) The Partnership/community group shall erect a sign above its public offices which will, include the EU logo and acknowledgment of EU funding.

(iii) The Partnership/community group shall ensure that public launches, media events and information events, include reference to the role of the Community, through the display of the EU logo, verbal acknowledgment of Community support etc.

(iv) In relation to measures related to the development of human resources, vocational training and employment, where these are of a sufficiently large scale, posters shall be displayed which include the EU logo and reference to funding by the European Social Fund (1995: 57-58).

²¹ The mid-term evaluation of the current Community Support Framework (1994-1999), published in 1997, describes this problem in the following terms:

It is commonplace to observe that the emerging institutional framework for local development as reflected in the institutions which manage this and related interventions at local level is plainly unsatisfactory. Clearly there is considerable duplication of grant-giving entities at local level. As mentioned already, this could be a form of constructive disorder, potentially bearing greater fruit than would an ossified but orderly set of institutions. Recent moves to co-ordinate and rationalise have been partially successful.

Evidently the capacity of the standing local authorities to play their part in economic development at local level has been weak. But it can be argued that, by by-passing them, this proliferation of *ad hoc* development entities at local level, each with discretionary budgets, further weakens the local authorities. In addition, these entities have but weak democratic control at local level, and surely this is a recipe for their being gradually captured by cliques in the years ahead (ESRI 1997: 111-112).

The report also argues elsewhere that the potential for overlap between individual agencies is liable to be far greater in the border region, with the IFI, INTERREG and the Peace and Reconciliation Programme all incorporating similar funding measures to various elements of the CSF, LEADER II and the Cohesion Fund, as well as to each other (ibid.: 211-212).

profoundly affects the willingness or ability of potential applicants to avail of EU grant-aid. Identifying which particular agency or agencies may be the most appropriate for a specific project is a highly convoluted process, and the phrase commonly used to describe this experience- "being sent around the treadmill"- has entered the lexicon of the development community in Donegal.²² In the words of one of my informants:

What happens is that they ring up the likes of Forbairt and Forbairt say, 'well we can't fund you, try the CEB' and they say, 'well we can't fund you, try LEADER', and LEADER say, 'well we can't fund you either, try Forbairt', and they're just going round on this treadmill all the time, and they just get fed up with it, you know?.

Sally Shorthall poses a series of questions in relation to the social implications of EU development funding. She asks why funding appears to be made available to some communities and not others, and whether or not deleterious consequences arise for those who are unsuccessful in funding applications (1994: 250). Implied in her comments is an assumption that EU programmes are *interventionist* in their policies, that somehow decisions are being made "behind office doors" regarding which groups should benefit from the provision of development aid, and which groups should lose out. In fact, this research in Donegal suggests that the very opposite is the case: communities are manifestly not passive recipients of funding, and almost the whole process is project-driven. Put simply, if a community group does not approach a development officer and fill out an application, they will not

²² By way of contrast, a short poem written by the development officer of the Peace and Reconciliation programme in Donegal characterises the nature of this complexity in a rather different way:

A community worker went to the SPCs,
To act on behalf of the CWC,
But all that he/she could CCC,
Was discussion at the CSG.
The discussion was about the change to the CEG,
Without any mention of the Anti-Poverty Strategy.
So off they went to the DLDC,
Who said let's meet with IPC and MFG,
And together with CWC,
Presented a strategy to the SPC.
Yes, it's all about strategy,
And how it fits into policy,
And we're told what's important is corporate theory,
And once again what is forgotten is the community.

(Reproduced in *Vision: the Magazine of the Donegal Local Development Company Ltd.* 1997: 8. The meaning of the various acronyms can be found in the glossary.)

receive any money.²³

The County Strategy Group has attempted to address this problem by establishing a “One-Stop Shop” in the Forbairt and IDA office on the Port Road in Letterkenny. The service was launched amid much publicity in January 1997 at a day-long event held at the largest hotel in the town, which was attended by all local development agencies in the county, the County Manager, various politicians and members of the general public. An administrator working at the RTC was seconded to manage the service, and for the first few weeks of its operation, an average of nine telephone calls per day were made to the office. Unfortunately, however, the CSG failed to incorporate any element for marketing in the original budget plan, and by June of 1997, the number of people using the service had declined to the extent that it had become largely redundant. Whilst the manager is still employed at the time of writing, she has been acting as an assistant to the Forbairt development officer in the county since this time.

In summary, then, the programme-orientated ethos of EU development planning represents a significant contributory factor to the way in which development is organised at local levels in Donegal, and Ireland as a whole. As well as creating an extremely complex bureaucratic environment, it has also been responsible for the mobilisation of a group of professional development activists who are united through a common philosophy, a commitment to the importance of local ownership of the development process, and a common goal, of securing EU grant-aid for their respective organisations. As will be made clear in the following sections, however, the definition of “local ownership” may be interpreted in a number of different ways, and the importance of social factors to the organisation of the development process in Donegal is something which cannot be ignored.

²³ In a short passage which says much about the process of development funding, Kearney et al describe the interaction between staff involved in LEADER I and potential applicants in the following terms:

The involvement of LEADER Personnel with many project promoters is frequently initiated by a telephone call, letter or visit to the LEADER office, by an individual who has got an idea for a project. Sometimes the catalyst for the initial contact has come through attendance at a public meeting or from some other information obtained through the media, or perhaps from some other individual who has some knowledge of LEADER (1995: 113).

This observation has also been noted by Breathnach, who highlights the problems which the “project-led” nature of local development may cause. In discussing employment and training programmes initiated by the government during the 1980s, he argues that:

...such schemes are of the ‘responsive’ variety: in other words, they are available to existing community groups which apply to avail of them. Frequently, however, it is the most disadvantaged communities which are the least organised, and hence the least likely to be in a position to make use of these schemes, although they are the communities which need the schemes most (1986: 79).

III. Sectoral Interest Groups.²⁴

III.1 Overview.

As alluded to above, Letterkenny, as well as being the location for the headquarters of most grant-aiding bodies, is also home to an array of development groups whose focus is upon specific sectors of the county's population. Examples include the Donegal Youth Service, Letterkenny Women's Centre, the ICTU Centre for the Unemployed, the Multiple Sclerosis Society, Donegal Travellers Project and St. Fiachra's Training Centre.²⁵ These organisations, by virtue of the nature of their activities, levels of funding, numbers of employees and strong links to EU programmes and development agencies, differ from those based in rural areas (which we will be considering in the next chapter), which rely to a far greater extent upon voluntarism, and where the focus is usually upon the entire population of a village, townland or geographical region. Most have been established only for a relatively short period- less than ten years in most cases- and all have received state and EU grant-aid in some form, usually from a number of different initiatives. In the case of the Women's Centre, for example, funding has been accessed from a variety of sources, including the North Western Health Board, the IFI, the Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, the Combat Poverty Agency, the Allen Lane Foundation, the VEC, the National Committee for Development Education, People in Need and the DLDC. Other organisations are funded variously by Foroige, the EU's EMPLOYMENT initiative, the Department of Social Welfare, FÁS and Donegal County Council.

During my time in Donegal, I came to know the individuals involved in this sector well on a personal level. One of the principal themes which emerged from the time I spent working amongst them was the tension they experienced between, on the one hand attempting to pursue the objectives they had set themselves, in terms of helping those people whom the activities of the particular organisation was geared towards, whilst also coping with the

²⁴ This particular term may be viewed as being similar in meaning to "community-based groups" employed by Varley and Ruddy. In noting that these types of groups "derive some of their identity from being rooted in a particular locality, but whose memberships are primarily constituted on some other basis", the authors envisage that women's or unemployed groups, sporting associations or local political organisations would be included in this category (1996: 71). My use of "sectoral" further refines this definition, however, by conveying the importance of *agency* in the activities of these groups. Sporting or political groups would therefore be ruled out on the basis of this definition, since they are unlikely to be constituted on the same basis as women's, unemployed, or travellers groups for example, in which the primary aim is to act *on behalf* of those who make up each population sector.

²⁵ St. Fiachra's Training Centre is another travellers project, providing educational schemes for the children of traveller families in Donegal.

day-to-day administrative duties associated with applying for and managing grant-aid. The quotations below typify this general attitude:

The problem I find [is that] I'm basically super-glued to a chair and desk, because all I'm doing is chasing funds. I'm not actually doing up my plan, and going to the funding agency now and saying 'here's my plan, and I want funding for it'. They're moving the goalposts, and they're saying to me, 'the goalposts are over here now, and this is what our criteria is now', and you have to change your plan and your submissions to the goalposts that have been established for you. It's not going in the right direction at all. There's no thinking and there's no *policy*....With me chasing funds, and filling in effectiveness reports, and doing all the accounts, and making sure that the paperwork is right, and my main skill is actually working with people, that's where my basic skill is, and that's lost to the organisation.²⁶

[The bureaucracy of EU funding is] absolutely crazy! Absolutely crazy! We ran a 'Youthview' day....and it was a verbal agreement that we were going to get £5000 [from an EU agency] to run it. Now, we over-budgeted, there were things that cost money that we didn't think would cost money, so there was a big deal about bills and receipts and stuff. And it transpired yesterday that they want the phone bill with, taken off, the actual phone calls we made in preparing for the day. That's how detailed they want the receipt procedure. So I mean, we have to order an itemised bill, which will cost us another £3.50 or £4.00, we have to go through each bill and find out whose numbers were whose, and take them off to verify that we spent the money. Absolutely crazy! It's just bureaucracy gone wrong.²⁷

The tension between administration and service provision is thus reflected in the organisation of development activity within the professional development sector. Many employees of sectoral interest groups, whilst holding extremely positive views of the EU's development philosophy, regard the way in which it is being implemented on the ground in Donegal in

²⁶ Youth Development Worker, Letterkenny.

²⁷ Development Officer, Rathmullan.

less-than-positive terms. This has led, in turn, to a schism between them and the employees and board members of local EU initiatives, which include not only the LEADER and Partnership companies, but also the County Enterprise Board and the County Council's Task Force.

Most individuals working professionally within sectoral interest groups in Letterkenny, as well as the employees of various area-based community groups located throughout the county, are members of a network which holds regular meetings in the town. In the section which follows, we describe one such meeting of this network, which serves to illustrate the issues discussed thus far in more detail.

III.2 The Community Workers Co-operative.

The Community Workers Co-operative is a national organisation based in Galway, which exists to provide support for those working in the "community sector" in Ireland, and to lobby government departments and civil servants to recognise the needs of the disadvantaged and marginalised in their policies and programmes.

In March 1997, the Donegal network of the Co-op, which had operated for a number of years on a largely informal basis as a support group for community development workers in the county, received a grant from the Peace and Reconciliation Programme, allowing them to employ a project officer and an administrator. An office was rented in Letterkenny, and through a promotional campaign led by the staff and the network's management committee, along with the marked upturn in the number of people employed as community workers in the county during 1997, membership of the group rapidly expanded. The group now has over 100 members, up to 30 of whom regularly attend the monthly meeting in Letterkenny. These meetings are designed to inform participants of any new initiatives being pursued at national and EU level, changes to the rules and regulations of each of the various funding programmes, developments within the county itself, and to share information across the membership. They also have an important social role, in that the nature of community development activity is such that paid workers are rarely employed on the same project; the members of the Co-op are therefore based in different parts of the county and have little chance to interact on a

day-to-day level with others operating in a similar capacity. As well as attending the meeting, members of the Co-op are also good friends, seeing each other regularly on a social level, and any events organised by their respective organisations, such as conferences, project launches or social events, are always well-attended by their colleagues in the network.

This group of professional activists should therefore be viewed as being distinct from those involved in the professional development *agency* sector, described elsewhere in this chapter. (Significantly, employees from the latter group do not, as a whole, attend the monthly meeting.) In part, this is due to the ethos of the organisation nationally, which exists essentially as a pressure group to lobby funding agencies, the government and the European Commission on behalf of “socially excluded” in Ireland. In addition, the membership of the Donegal network is made up almost entirely of people involved in social and community development projects. Economic development is rarely discussed at monthly meetings, and the general attitude of community workers is that it has no part to play in community development: as someone put it to me, “economics is a dirty word around here”. The gender balance of the Co-op is highly uneven, with over 75% of members being female, and many of its members, although resident in the county, are originally from outside Donegal, or even Ireland. Those who regularly attend the monthly meeting include two people from Northern Ireland, an Englishwoman, an American and an Austrian.²⁸

The following is an extract from my fieldnotes, recording the meeting of the Co-op held on Nov. 5th. 1997; it is reproduced here in an unedited form, with explanatory details indicated thus [].

The meeting started with everyone arranged, as usual, in a large circle in the centre of the room. Although everyone knew each other, people were asked by the chairperson [Mary, a single woman in her early thirties] to introduce themselves and to state which project they were from. There were sixteen women present and four men, including myself. The development officer of the cross-border community project [run jointly by the Co-op and the Holywell Trust in Derry] gave some feedback from the national AGM on how the group’s comments on the Regional Network Document had been received

²⁸ The social background of Co-op members mirrors that of the employees of the EU development agencies in the county, who are also predominantly from outside the county.

(the whole report had been re-focused), and there was general congratulation of the Donegal delegates when those who had attended described the way in which they had dominated the discussion throughout the day. Anne [the secretary of the group] had been registering people on arrival, and "5 or 6" Donegal people were there. A few minutes of the meeting had elapsed when Michael [a man in his 50s, a youth worker from a town in Inishowen] asked whether anyone had a pencil. He had forgotten to bring one, but his comment that "our project doesn't have any money, anyway" was greeted with general hilarity. It seems that the workshop in Downings was a disaster. [The workshop was held during the previous week, and was designed as a "get-together" session by the Co-op for its members]. The Co-op had paid for two facilitators to be present, but "we didn't need them in the end; due to the lack of participants, it was impossible to run the workshops that had been arranged". Mary's attitude was generally one of admonishment, and the people around the room looked rather sheepish about their failure to attend. (This included myself). She said that the bulk of the two days was spent going over the action plan once more, which seemed rather pointless, and proposed that the members of the Co-op split up into various working groups in order to examine the Action Plan and the result of the Downings meeting and make suggestions for December's meeting of the Co-op. It was important for everyone to be involved in the running of the Co-op, she said, to counter some accusations that had been made that the steering group was "exclusionary and elitist". Acting on a suggestion from Siobhan [a community development worker from Inishowen], it was agreed that the working groups should be generated randomly at the start of December's meeting, and then meet for two hours in the morning, the Co-op meeting beginning at midday and not 10.30 as it usually does.

The Information Sharing Session began with comments from Roisin [the manager of a women's project in Letterkenny], who told the group about a consultative forum report, recently published by the West Belfast Economic Forum, relating to the Peace and Reconciliation Programme. Apparently the report makes a number of references to social exclusion, and there was an almost tangible "pricking up of ears" at the mention of these words. The document was passed around and everyone noted down the address of where they could obtain a copy. This led on to a long discussion about the Peace and Reconciliation Task Force [T.F.], prompted by a comment from

someone that the T.F. is manoeuvring itself to become the major development group in Donegal and “we have to be ready”. The length and animation of the discussion was partly because those present- interestingly- appeared very ignorant of the T.F.’s activities. Some of them were unaware what it actually was, and only Anne [a women’s networker] and Roisin seemed to know the composition of the board. Most had no idea what the money was being spent on. “John’s [development officer with the Peace and Reconciliation Programme] on it, isn’t he?” “Yeah, but he had to really fight to get onto it, and he only has observer status- he’s not allowed to be a member. He’s still making waves on it, though”. An elderly woman stated that the T.F. were currently trying to “compare themselves to the partnerships in the North”, something which she dismissed with derisive scorn. “They’ve not consulted with any community groups, they’re not democratic, and have not kept to the principles of the programme”.

There was general agreement with this comment; “undemocratic” was the term which most readily summed up the group’s feelings, and there was a short interlude in which people talked amongst themselves about their own experience of the T.F., the county council, and councillors in general. The elderly lady again articulated the disjointed conversations going on around her by describing her own experience of a local councillor, who had, after her project had received some funding from the Department of Social Welfare, come up to her in a meeting, nudged her arm in a conspiratorial manner and said “I got you some money, eh?” There was a murmur of agreement around the room and some shaking of heads, the comment prompting a further discussion on councillors. Again, the most surprising aspect of the various observations people made was their simplistic nature: “The councillors have no real power, you know. It’s the officers who drive things forward”; “Do all county councillors sit on the T.F.?” “Yes, I think so”; “All they care about is getting elected. They have no idea about community development”.

Michael, who had sat in silence as this discussion was going on around him, introduced a discordant note into the proceedings, in questioning the extent to which the community sector could claim to be more democratic than councillors. “I think we should be careful here. They are elected by the public every five years, and that’s what they’ll say if you ask them: they

have a mandate. I mean, there are over 2000 single parents in Inishowen, but only four members of the Co-op live up there. How can I hope to represent 500 single parents? They have *real* representation.” (Silence around the room for a few seconds) “....as do we” (said as an afterthought). “Its just a problem we will have to work out”. No-one said anything after this interjection, and it was clear that few people in the room agreed with him.

The elderly lady broke the silence, with a comment about the chief executive of one of the grant-giving agencies in the county. “Yes, *that* --, of Jackson’s fame.²⁹ Well, he’s worse than we thought”. Apparently she had been talking to him recently, as part of a survey she was doing for her own project. “He doesn’t believe in Community Development at all. He believes it’s only good for building a community hall, or organising flower arranging classes, or whatever. All he’s interested in are projects which will generate a profit”. There was an audible intake of breath at the word “profit”, and a number of people shook their heads. Someone then asked whether the individual concerned sits on the T.F., and when told that he did, the discussion then returned to this topic. “They’re not dealing with the aims of the programme. They’re doing nothing about reconciliation and social exclusion.” It was agreed that Co-op members should write to the Consultative Forum for the Peace and Reconciliation Programme and complain about the T.F., and should encourage members of the Co-op in other counties to do likewise. The elderly lady also suggested that “we should keep hassling them for information about what they are doing”.

Towards the end of the meeting, Siobhan stated that all this was very unfamiliar to her, coming, as she does, from the North. “We had everyone together in the partnership- councillors, community sector reps, state reps, everyone. And we got on fine with the councillors.” To which someone responded, “what did you do, hypnotise them?”, to general laughter.

III.3. Discussion.

Although apparently trivial in content, there are, in fact, a number of important themes, both methodological as well as empirical, which can be drawn out from this brief description. The account was written in a nearby café

²⁹ This comment refers to a public meeting which the group had held at Jackson’s Hotel in Ballybofey on Local Government Reform. The individual in question had stood up at the meeting and castigated the members of the Co-op for their emphasis upon community rather than enterprise development.

afterwards, and is included here in an unexpurgated form in order to provide the reader with some sense of the environment where the event took place, the social context which underpinned the comments that were made around the room and the processes through which ethnography is constructed. I could, of course, have chosen to decontextualise the empirical data, and to utilise it in a standard academic manner, perhaps with selective quotations from those present in order support a general argument. However, one might suggest that this approach to textual representation often serves to remove an important element from the data, as well as to over-prioritise the authority of the ethnographer. Naturally, the opinions of those present are being represented through my voice: I had no tape recorder, and, whilst I have tried to reproduce what people said as authentically as possible, the comments are not verbatim transcriptions. On that particular day, I gave the Co-op's administrator a lift back to her office in my car, and was therefore unable to write-up my observations as soon after the meeting as I would have liked. My role in the group is also of significance here. I was regarded, and indeed, viewed myself not only as an observer but as an active participant in the Co-op, a change in status which probably occurred about ten minutes into the first meeting which I had attended ten months previously, when someone asked me my opinion on a certain programme that was being discussed. This precluded me from taking notes during the proceedings, and certain nuances of what was said may have therefore faded from memory when I came to describe them in my note-book half-an-hour later. It would also be difficult for me to claim any sort of objectivity in representing the views of Co-op members, as I had already attended several meetings prior to this particular one, and knew many of those present socially, as friends. Finally, the data are also selective in that I chose to record information which I thought at the time was the most important to my research, testified by the fact that the meeting actually lasted over an hour and an half.

So, whilst the data are necessarily imperfect, this account may still be used in order to illustrate the crucial importance of discursive context in understanding the social processes which underlie development activity, and there are a number of points that can be made in this regard. Firstly, the setting of the meeting. All Co-op gatherings are held in the Cheshire Apartments³⁰, a residential home for the disabled in Letterkenny, which,

³⁰ The Cheshire Apartments are run by a U.K.-based NGO called Leonard Cheshire Homes, which provides accommodation for the disabled throughout the British Isles.

although located about a mile from the network's offices, provides a room free-of-charge, the manager of the establishment being a long-standing member of the organisation. Hence there is a certain parallel between this "caring" environment and the overall ethos of the group, surrounding their aim to represent the needs of the most disadvantaged in Irish society. The room itself is spacious, with a small kitchen area located at one end, allowing the space to be used for both general social intercourse prior to the official start of the meeting, for which the kitchen is the primary focus, as well as for the more formal proceedings, the large floor area enabling the chairs to be arranged in a large circle regardless of the number of people who may attend. The seating arrangements lend the meeting an air of informality, emphasise the equality of status of the participants, and are a physical reflection of the social cohesion of the group. Meetings are punctuated by joke-telling and laughter, and there are very rarely any displays of ill-feeling between members. This sense of "togetherness" is further strengthened by the knowledge that everyone present shares similar values, politically and ideologically, regarding the meaning and purposes of community development, and are also, to employ an oft-used phrase, "in the same boat". Although the relative ages of those who attend the monthly meetings range from people in their early 20s to those close to retirement, most are employed in short-term posts funded through various EU initiatives, the duration of which is usually uncertain.

As the discussion concerning the workshop and the Action Plan demonstrates, Co-op members are extremely sensitive to allegations that they may not be acting in the most inclusionary and democratic ways as possible, and preventing equal participation from all members in the running of the network and general decision-making. Whilst no-one is quite certain who made the accusations referring to the "elitism of the steering group" (they would certainly never be made in the context of a monthly meeting), various measures have been put in place to counter these charges. The membership of this group, which manages the finances of the Co-op, is rotated annually, and each monthly Co-op meeting has a different chairperson, usually the person who took the minutes of the previous one, whose name appears on the bottom of the agenda distributed to members beforehand. In this respect, the comments made during this particular meeting regarding the lack of openness in the County Council may be viewed in part as a reflection of the

pride members have in the egalitarian structure of their own organisation. Thus the discussion concerning the Task Force for Peace and Reconciliation is illustrative of the general opinion of those working in the community sector that they themselves are *more* democratic, and therefore have an enhanced validity in their claim to represent local people, than do the elected members of the local authority. Michael, who probably had a greater level of familiarity with the political structures in the county than any of the other members present, represented a lone voice in arguing from the point-of-view of the politicians.³¹

Perhaps the major point to stress about this aspect of the discussion is the general lack of knowledge displayed by the participants concerning the County Council, something which brings into sharp relief the particularistic nature of development in Donegal. Few of those present had even heard of the Task Force- despite the fact that their own organisation is funded by the same EU initiative- and many of the comments were based around the fact that, in its grant-aiding activities, it did not appear to be addressing the problems of social exclusion. However, the Task Force actually has no direct remit in this area, being responsible for “urban and village renewal and tourism”, under measures 1(a) and 1(b) of sub-programme 2(c) of the Peace and Reconciliation Programme. This sub-programme, to quote from the handbook,

...aims to improve the physical environment of towns and villages which have experienced physical decline...Works will include landscaping, the clearing and development of sites and physical amenities. (CEC 1995: 99).

In the context of the meeting, therefore, the Task Force may be viewed in terms of a “stick” with which to beat the county councillors, the real target of the ire of those present, and a convenient method of reinforcing the social boundaries of the Co-op in opposition to another organisation which is so clearly dissimilar. This observation is crucial to our overall thesis, as it serves to illustrate a basic premise, namely that the various developmental sectors in Donegal can be regarded, and indeed operate, as distinctive social entities. Thus the meetings of the Co-op perform an extremely important social function

³¹ These issues will be returned to in chapter seven.

in reiterating a sense of a shared collective identity among the participants, which, as with all aspects of identity, is felt most strongly when contrasted with the characteristics of another group. The role of “story-telling” is clearly of some significance here, in crystallising and objectifying the rather emotive opinions of the participants towards the councillors: the anecdotal comments made by the elderly lady regarding the Chief Executive and her encounter with a local councillor were, in the context of the meeting, employed more for the purposes of confirming social solidarity than as a means of conveying objective “facts”, even though they were presented as such. The speaker knew that those around her would share her views, and was therefore articulating the general mood of the gathering by illuminating the various statements that had previously been made about councillors- “they are undemocratic”; “they only care about getting elected”- through the prism of her own experience.

In this, she is also reflecting an attitude prevalent across the whole of the local development arena.³² All sectoral interest groups, together with the five LEADER and Partnership companies operating in the county have specifically outlawed county councillors from becoming involved in their boards of management, either as members of the main board or as participants in sub-groups. In interviews, those working in such organisations- either as employees or as members of management boards- cited this factor as one of the principal strengths of their organisations. Whilst the LEADER II programme allows local councillors to become members of management boards, this is prohibited in the case of the Local Development Programme; in other words, there is a statutory basis for their exclusion (ADM Ltd. 1995: 12). However, the vociferous opposition to the participation of politicians in EU development programmes indicates that this particular regulation may

³² Indeed, the views held by members of the Co-op in this regard are illustrative of the general attitude of the national “community platform” towards local politicians. In the words of the Community Directors’ Forum, a network of managers of the thirty eight partnerships created under the LDP:

The partnership approach is based on the bringing together of a wide range of groups and organisations- voluntary, statutory, community- which sit down together and plan their work in an inclusive, horizontal manner. By contrast, local authorities operate in a more hierarchical, vertical manner in which powers are defined, decisions are made on the basis of roles and authority within a predetermined system and instructions are commanded down the line. Local authorities are unused to working in a consultative, collegial, participative manner and ill-adapted to changing their approach. They are not familiar with current community development practice, nor its strong focus on disadvantage. Local authorities have never shown willingness to treat community organisations in any other than a very subordinate role. They failed to develop their powers to set up approved councils in the Local Government Act, 1941. Their understanding of community action is very weak. Even when required to consult with voluntary organisations, as under the Housing Act 1988, they failed to do so in an meaningful manner. These are real problems, because community development is, by all current working definitions of the term, inseparable from bottom up participative development (Harvey 1997: 15-16).

* For an explanation of the meaning of this term, see chapter three, note 39.

have been incorporated into the LDP due to the concerns expressed by local groups across the country over the role of politicians during the lifetime of LEADER I and other initiatives pursued under the first CSF: many argued that the absence of local councillors on their boards resulted entirely from their own decision-making, and were unaware that it is one of the major components in the official regulations of the LDP. The following quotations, taken from transcriptions of interviews, typify the general opinion of the political sector held by those involved in sectoral and grant-aiding organisations in Donegal:

There was a conscious decision taken from day one to by-pass the political sphere of things. All politicians are interested in is doing things for their own constituents and protecting their own patch: they have no interest in looking at projects purely on their merit, which is what [we] do. To my knowledge, there has never been any case of people on the board doing things for their own interest. We would be very much opposed to politicians becoming involved, but it might be O.K. if it worked the other way, with voluntary and community reps. sitting on local authority committees.

It might work in other counties, I don't know, but here in Donegal, it just wouldn't work with the politicians we've got. To give you an example, if I got an application from someone in Convoy, and then another application for the same type of project from someone in Milford, and that one was a better project, then I wouldn't have any hesitation to support the Milford project. No hesitation at all. But that wouldn't happen with politicians- no way. There's too many votes in it, you see, they'd just be looking after their own areas. The councillors here have no idea about local development and I don't know what's going to happen if they get their hands on LEADER.

[In reference to the County Strategy Group]: It originally started out as just the chief executive or the managers of each agency attending, with the County Manager, and that was fine. But then they broadened it to include some representation from county councillors, and that has changed the whole structure, and they

treat it like they do their own council business, and they're so ignorant, and it's just dreadful. It's just like watching the Dáil or the parliament in England; they talk away, go in and out, take telephone calls and once one thing on the agenda which is of interest to them has been completed, they might just get up and walk out, or start up a conversation with the person next door to them- it's just so ignorant. All of us are sitting around saying 'this is terrible', and this is what is going to happen if they do get control of the whole thing, you know. And they bring in all sorts of issues and agendas- roads and sewerage- that have nothing to do with community development, absolutely nothing to do with it.

The views expressed here highlight the way in which the very term "community development" acts as a social bonding mechanism for those individuals involved in this sector. Moreover, the fact that these quotes are all from females (and county councillors are typically men in late middle age) may be regarded as significant in serving to further compound the social, as well as structural separation, existing between the political and development arenas in the county. It follows, then, that an apparently innocuous meeting such as this may shed light on a number of important observations about the way in which the discourse associated with one element of the professional development sector in Donegal operates to provide an "infrastructural base" upon which development activity is built.

To a large extent, the autonomy of this particular sector is extended by, and articulated through the links which exist between the Co-op and the EU itself. Members of the group's steering committee, for example, have regular contact with EU officials, principally via their attendance at meetings and conferences at which representatives of the EU are present.³³ The representatives of sectoral interest groups are also connected to the organisation in a more oblique manner. As suggested above, the principles

³³ One such conference took place in October 1997 in Derry, which was convened jointly by the Co-op and the North West Community Network, a partner body bringing together members of community groups operating in counties Derry, Fermanagh and Tyrone. Its title was a "Shared Vision for the North West", and its purpose was to generate a series of recommendations concerning cross-border development in the region. Of the 152 delegates who attended this conference, only two were elected councillors, and both were members of Derry City Council. Furthermore, there was no participation from government ministers or state representatives from either side of the border. Instead, three of the ten speakers who addressed the gathering during the course of the day were from the EU. They included Monica Wulf-Mathies, EU Commissioner for Regional Policy and Social Cohesion (DGXVI) and Jacques Delors, both of whom were "video-linked" from Brussels, and an Irish employee of DGXVI who attended the event in person. Events such as this encapsulate the importance in which the EU is regarded by members of the organising bodies for the future of cross-border development in the region.

of EU development are held in high regard by most of these individuals, even if the ways in which they are being implemented in Donegal are not. Before we leave this group, then, it is necessary to explore in detail one term which emerged at various points during the meeting of the Co-op- namely “social exclusion”- since its use serves to express the way in which the independence of this sector is derived not only from a vociferous opposition to other groups, articulated in part through links with EU officials, but also from the ideological and *discursive* relationship they have with the organisation.

III.4. Promoting Social Inclusion.

The term “social exclusion/inclusion” is a central element in the discourse of EU development planning. It first emerged in EU documentation during the mid-1970s, when the then EEC began to develop policies aimed at combating the vagaries of the free market through the targeting of spending towards specific geographical areas and demographic sectors across Europe which were perceived as being vulnerable to social and economic marginalisation. A recognition of the need to combat social exclusion in the EU’s official policy did not occur until 1989, however, when the European Council of Ministers adopted a resolution entitled *Towards a Europe of Solidarity- intensifying the fight against social exclusion and fostering integration*. (Shucksmith et al 1994: 345). The model for the EU’s economic policies, contained in the 1993 publication *Growth, Competitiveness and Employment* reinforced this position, stating that one of the pillars of EU policy should be the promotion of solidarity, something which

takes the form of a solidarity between the poorer and richer regions of the Union and the fight against social exclusion (CEC 1993: 15).

The term is now most widely used in EU documents relating to development, and many of the programmes have specific allocations within their overall budgets devoted to “tackling social exclusion”. Moreover, the term has recently come to the attention of the wider public in Britain and Ireland through the establishment of a cabinet committee on social exclusion by both governments.

Given its widespread use, it is surprising to discover that the actual definition of social exclusion is rarely spelled out in anything but the most superficial manner, either in official EU documents or by those who use the term in their day-to-day discourse in Donegal. Whilst it clearly refers to some form of social marginalisation, what is normally referred to as “the inability to fully participate in society”, the linkages between this and poverty, disability, discrimination and inequality- its usual adjuncts- are more opaque. The fact that social exclusion is often used in combination with one or more of these words, (i.e. poverty *and* social exclusion, disability *and* social exclusion) in a highly arbitrary manner suggests an underlying assumption that to be unemployed, homeless, a traveller or an elderly or disabled person, for instance, *necessarily* involves being assigned a marginal status within society, or, indeed, being cast outside its boundaries altogether. This is reinforced by the fact that other, more loaded terms often accompany its use, for example in phrases such as “those *suffering* from social exclusion”, or even “the *evils* of social exclusion”. Given this uncritical acceptance of an automatic relationship between status and the level of social participation, the interchangeable way in which the term is used becomes highly problematic in this context: to imply that one actively *suffers* from disability or from being a traveller or even from being elderly is far less acceptable than to say that one suffers from unemployment or poverty, if, indeed, it is acceptable at all.

These arguments also serve to demonstrate the ambiguity surrounding which groups of people should actually be classified as being socially excluded. Only one development initiative currently operating in Donegal- the Local Development Programme- specifically defines the sectors of population who are to be the beneficiaries of funding provided under measures devoted to the promotion of social inclusion. In this case, grant applications are assessed principally on the basis of whether resulting projects will have a positive impact upon the target groups. Even here, however, the definition is imprecise. To quote from the handbook for the programme:

The target groups are the socially excluded, the long-term unemployed and those at risk of becoming long-term unemployed. The requirements of those who are particularly disadvantaged must be borne in mind. These include: travellers; homeless people;

It is worth noting that there is no mention here of the elderly or young people, for example. In the case of other programmes, socially excluded groups are either not identified at all (e.g. INTERREG), or classified in such a way as to be open to a wide variety of different interpretations. The handbook for the Peace and Reconciliation Programme, for example, despite referring in its introduction to social inclusion as the “fundamental value which must underpin the entire programme....against which other actions should be audited” (CEC 1995: 16), includes various measures for grant-aid, the titles of which, I would contend, are relatively meaningless. These include “preventing exclusion”, “developing grass-roots capacities”, “promoting the inclusion of vulnerable groups”, and “promoting pathways to reconciliation”. Specific examples of which groups are to be targeted in the programme are conspicuous by their absence, meaning that it is largely up to the county-based development officers working on the ground to come up with their own ideas of who should be included, and who should not.

Despite its rather vague definition (or perhaps because of it), the term is very widely employed among those working in the sectoral interest groups discussed above, together with the employees and board members involved in those EU programmes which incorporate measures to address social exclusion either directly or indirectly (such as the Local Development and Peace and Reconciliation Programmes), both in conversation and in written documents. It operates as both a “development label”, as a means of articulating the relationship between “problems” and “solutions”, and for the purposes of uniting those involved in community development in opposition to other sectors. Fundamentally, it describes what people and organisations do, why they do it and whom they do it with.

The term is not used, or even understood, in Donegal outside this relatively small group of professionals. It would be very unusual, for example, for councillors to use the term in speeches or amongst themselves in the council chamber, and only the most enlightened members of voluntary groups, who are well-versed in the language of EU development, would employ it in day-to-day discourse. It may therefore be regarded as an expression of the independence of professional community development activists from the

political and business arenas, and the linkages- both ideological and actual- which exist between them and the EU itself. For these individuals it represents the symbolic engine which underpins the motivational basis for their involvement in the development sector, pulling in its wake a series of inter-linked ideological carriages in which the ethics of charity, community, public expenditure and a commitment to others are housed. Fundamentally, the autonomy exerted by this group within the context of development in Donegal as a whole is derived in part from its exclusive ownership of the term: it articulates a collective philosophy regarding the meaning and purposes of development, as well as the group's own distinctive identity within the bureaucratic environment of EU development planning to which they ultimately belong.

There exists a largely uncritical assumption among members of the CWC in Donegal that any EU programmes which incorporate a local dimension in their administration should necessarily be addressing social exclusion. (This was highlighted during the meeting by the generally dismissive view of the Task Force). Whilst those bodies which incorporate political representation on their boards of management have attracted the most vocal levels of criticism in this regard, concerns have also been directed at other EU development agencies outside the local authority's ambit. One of the most significant Community Initiatives currently operating in the county is LEADER II, and our focus will now turn to the way in which this particular programme has been implemented in eastern Donegal.

IV. The Implementation of LEADER II in Eastern Donegal.

Under the first round of Structural Funds (1989-1993), the area of Donegal lying outside the Gaeltacht and the Inishowen peninsula was not represented by a LEADER group, with only MFG and the Inishowen Community Development Group operating the programme in the county. The announcement of LEADER II by the European Commission in late 1993 attracted the attention of a number of different area-based groups throughout the eastern half of the county, who began to prepare submissions to the Department of Agriculture to act as LEADER companies.

In the south of the county, ten people active in local area-based associations came together to establish a new development committee to cover the non-Gaeltacht area south of Ballybofey and Stranolar (known popularly as Twin Towns), a region roughly described by a figure of seven geographically. They called this the “Four Masters Enterprise Group”, in reference to an order of Franciscan monks from Donegal Town who compiled the famous *Annals of Ulster*, the first recorded history of the Province, in the sixteenth century (O’Donovan 1966). Those involved in the creation of the organisation described it as being “very bottom up”: representatives from every townland in the area were elected to sit on the management board, and a steering sub-group was convened in order to prepare the submission for LEADER funding. The sub-group was chaired by a former *Irish Times* journalist, a native of the area who had returned from Dublin with his wife and daughter in 1991. As well as running a local group for the disabled, he was also the managing director of a public relations consultancy in Killybegs, and through this, had gained valuable experience of the procedures associated with applying for EU aid.

In the north of the county, another group was established to generate a LEADER submission for the area north of Twin Towns. Again, local community groups were involved, together with the chief agricultural officer for the county, who had been instructed by the Department of Agriculture to generate a popular consensus around voluntary groups of the area for a LEADER Action Plan. Largely through his efforts, the Sheephaven/Mulroy/Swilly Development Co-operative was created, which had representation from approximately forty local development groups.

As well as these two associations, a third group also became active in seeking LEADER status. The Ballybofey/Stranolar Development Group emerged in the summer of 1993, led by a local politician, to pursue LEADER funding for the entire eastern area of the county. Unlike the other potential applicants, it appears that this organisation failed to generate a popular mandate around the voluntary groups of the area, something perhaps due the nature of its leadership: according to various unsubstantiated rumours, the politician asked local groups to pay £100 each to be included by name in the LEADER submission.

Negotiations between the Irish Government and the Commission regarding the structure of the new initiative continued throughout 1994, and confusion reigned as to the type of groups which would be allowed to participate in the programme. In anticipation that County Enterprise Boards would be conferred LEADER group status, the Donegal CEB also began the process of applying for funding. This was partly in response to a circular received by the acting Chief Executive Officer from an official at the Department of Enterprise and Employment in May 1994. The relevant passages of this document are reproduced below, in order to illustrate the uncertainty which existed at government level during this transitory phase.

I have received a number of queries recently about the designation of Areas of Disadvantage under the I Development Programme and the likely approach to implementing LEADER II in such areas.

/.../

The government has decided that LEADER should be the primary vehicle for local development in rural areas. It has become clear, however, that arrangements for the funding, programme content and delivery mechanisms for LEADER II cannot be finalised at the same time or in the same context as the negotiations with the European Commission on the LDP...In this regard, the Department of the Taoiseach which has responsibility for the Disadvantaged Areas Programme has confirmed that it will not be possible to finalise the programme content, funding and delivery mechanisms appropriate to intervention in the designated rural disadvantaged areas under the LDP until decisions on the implementation of LEADER II have been taken towards the end of this year.

In the meantime, a County Enterprise Board with a remit for the development of a County area included among the ten new designated rural areas is well placed at this stage to formulate proposals, consistent with its overall strategic plan, setting out how it might, either on its own or with other local interests, seek selection as a LEADER group and thereby provide a single mechanism through which local development initiatives complementary to such a dual remit might be implemented successfully.³⁴

³⁴ Letter received by acting CEO, Donegal CEB from the Enterprise Programmes Division of the Department of Enterprise and Employment, 9th. May 1994. Attached as Appendix No. 3 to Donegal County Council Minutes of Meetings, 30th. May 1994. (Emphasis added).

A Press Release issued by the CEB in the same month indicated its firm intention to seek LEADER status:

Under the Government's Local Development Programme, the Enterprise Action Plan to be prepared by the CEB will provide a strategic framework for future development initiatives in Donegal.

The Enterprise Board is initiating a programme of consultation with prospective applicants for LEADER group status under LEADER II and with other interest groups in order to integrate all enterprise support activities within the county. This consultation will take place over the next two months and enable a comprehensive and integrated action plan to be agreed and submitted to the Dept. of Enterprise and Employment by September of this year.

It is expected that applicant groups for LEADER group status will be required to take the Action Plan into account in framing their business plans. *The preparation of the Donegal Enterprise Action Plan will also provide a basis on which the Board may apply for selection as the most appropriate vehicle for implementing LEADER in the context of a more comprehensive approach to local enterprise development.*³⁵

By the summer of 1994, there were therefore four separate organisations in existence which were hoping to be granted the contract to operate LEADER outside Inishowen and the Gaeltacht, making a total (with the pan-national Islands LEADER Group) of seven potential applicants in Donegal as a whole. Of these, the County Enterprise Board probably felt that it had the best chance of success, as it was an established organisation with strong links to the local authority and government departments. However, the CEB's plans were thrown into disarray in October of that year, when the Commission announced that it had rejected the Irish government's proposal to allow CEBs also to administer LEADER II. Moreover, when officials at the Department of Agriculture learned of the existence of the other three potential LEADER groups, they refused to consider any of the submissions individually, and instead instructed them to work together to prepare a joint proposal.

³⁵ Press Release issued by the Donegal CEB in May 1994. Attached as Appendix No. 2 to Donegal County Council Minutes of Meetings, 30th. May 1994. (Emphasis added).

It was at this point- in late 1994- that yet another organisation emerged which was to become the key player in the bid to secure LEADER funding for eastern Donegal. Donegal Creameries, a large dairying co-operative formed through a merger between four smaller co-operatives in 1970³⁶, was already involved in a local development group called Springboard 2000, whose activities were concentrated upon the Letterkenny and Milford Electoral Areas. Under its former name of the Letterkenny Area Development Association, Springboard 2000 had secured funding of £50,000 through the EC's Global Grant for Local Development³⁷ to support local enterprise and initiatives undertaken by local community groups. An Information Technology training centre had been established in the premises of the Vocational Educational Committee in Letterkenny, and the group had carried out a survey of community groups and businesses throughout eastern Donegal to ascertain their development needs (Meehan 1995). It had also supported a small number of community development projects around the region. With a board largely reflecting the EU's partnership principle, consisting of a number of individuals from statutory agencies (namely FÁS, the IFI, Teagasc, the Department of Social Welfare and the VEC), employers (the Chief Executive of Donegal Creameries and representatives from the Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce and Trades Council), along with nine members of community and voluntary groups, Springboard 2000 was very well placed to apply for LEADER status. Additionally, the organisation had developed strong links with ADM Ltd. in Dublin, the government agency responsible for the distribution of funding under the Global Grant.

Under the auspices of Donegal Creameries, a meeting was convened with the chairpersons of the other three potential applicant groups in the county, and from this, the Donegal Local Development Company was formed. A consultant employed by Springboard 2000 was transferred to this new group in order to prepare the submissions for LEADER II status and, later, an application for funding under Sub-Programme 2 of the Local Development Programme, and the DLDC was incorporated as a limited company in July 1995. During the initial period of the company's operation, Donegal Creameries provided free office accommodation at their main distribution plant at Ballyraine, Letterkenny, and financed the production of "Area Action

³⁶ See chapter two, section V.

³⁷ See chapter three, section III.4. (By way of reminder, the Global Grant for Local Development was established by the European Commission in 1992 to support the indigenous development of areas in Ireland which were located outside those covered by the LEADER and PESP initiatives).

Plans” required as part of the application procedure. The co-operative also agreed to fund the first month’s salary of a manager, who was appointed in September 1995. The DLDC’s proposal to manage LEADER II was finally approved by the Department of Agriculture in October 1995, and in May the following year, the company also secured the contract to administer the Local Development Programme.

In its first year of operation, the management board of the DLDC reflected the tripartite structure of the Springboard 2000 group, and consisted of twelve representatives from the voluntary/community sector, six social partners, and six members of statutory bodies. Six of the twelve were appointed from the boards of the Four Masters, Sheephaven/Mulroy/Swilly and Ballybofey/Stranolar Development Groups, which became elective “forums” for the southern, northern and eastern sectors of the DLDC’s jurisdiction. Initially, these forums were convened every month in order to provide an opportunity for members of community groups (approximately thirty in each area, who were themselves elected to the forums) to receive feedback on the progression of the company. The other individuals were former directors of Springboard, which also transferred five of the six state representatives and social partners to the new board. (The manager of the Letterkenny Chamber of Commerce, which had rented office space to Springboard, stood down). They were joined by two representatives from the Letterkenny branch of the ICTU, and one each from the IFA, IDA and the North Western Health Board, together with the chairman and chief executive of Donegal Creameries (who became, respectively, the secretary and treasurer of the nascent company), a prominent Donegal hotelier (representing IBEC) and the County Manager. In December 1996, the number of representatives from the community/voluntary sector was reduced to nine, when three individuals, one from each of the three forums, replaced six who stood down from the board.

The bureaucratic structure of the DLDC has been greatly extended since this time. A number of sub-committees established by the DLDC during 1995- for natural resources, tourism and business enterprise- are responsible for the evaluation of applications received for each area and the provision of recommendations to the main board, which has the final say in the grant approval process.³⁸ These sub-groups have a membership of between eight

and ten, which includes at least three members of the main board, the remainder being drawn from a variety of organisations with an interest in the particular focus of each. Under the LDP Strand of the DLDC's remit, three working committees have also been created, to undertake the development of strategic plans in the areas of unemployment, youth and transport, which again incorporate individuals not directly involved with the company.

With a total spending budget over three years (1996-1999) amounting to almost £5m (£3m under the LEADER initiative, together with £1.9m from the LDP), the DLDC has become the pre-eminent development organisation in the county. Its budget has been further augmented through the provision of grants from the Peace and Reconciliation Programme, which funded the appointment of two "community link" workers during 1997.³⁹ At the time of writing, the company has a staff of fifteen, based in two well-equipped offices located in Letterkenny and Donegal Town. By December 1997, the company had supported a total of 115 projects from throughout its area of operation.⁴⁰

V. The Experience of LEADER II and the LDP in Eastern Donegal.

Given that the DLDC is responsible for the implementation of a highly distinctive model of development practice, and is additionally charged with an agenda focused *directly* upon the alleviation of poverty (a characteristic which is itself unique to the LDP in the context of all other EU initiatives currently sponsored by the Structural Funds), the extent to which the company has been successful in its pursuit of these objectives becomes a highly pertinent question for the purposes of this study. Whilst a comprehensive evaluation of the DLDC's grant-aiding activities lies beyond our scope⁴¹, it is possible to compare the rhetoric of the EU's development philosophy, as outlined in chapter three, with its practical manifestation in eastern Donegal. In the following sections, the nature of the two concepts central to this model, namely "bottom-up development" and "partnership", will be explored in detail, with reference to how they have been interpreted and applied in the

³⁸ Another sub-group, focusing upon community development, has recently been established.

³⁹ See chapter six, section II and Appendix Seven.

⁴⁰ A breakdown of the nature of these projects by sector is provided in Appendix Seven.

⁴¹ Appendix Seven provides a guide to the grant-aiding activities of the DLDC, the Peace and Reconciliation Programme, the County Enterprise Board and the Task Force.

county. By focusing upon the differing understanding of these terms offered by individuals from the three sectors which constitute the DLDC's board of management, along with the employees of the company, the purpose of this section is to demonstrate the ways in which the conception of development itself is shaped by background, experience and ideology, and is translated into social relations between people active in the administration of EU programmes in the county.

V.1. The Community/Voluntary Sector and "Bottom Up" Development.

As we have emphasised strongly in previous chapters, the involvement by community representatives on the management boards of EU programmes is *the* sovereign feature of the approach adopted in both the LEADER and Local Development Programmes. The elective forums established by the DLDC are therefore a crucial element in its claim to be implementing the philosophy of these initiatives, as they are intended to provide a conduit for the communication of local concerns and ideas upwards from voluntary groups via their elected representatives on the main board, and the dissemination of information downwards from the company.

It would, however, be a misrepresentation to suggest that the forums have operated in as smooth a manner as was hoped for when they were created in 1995. A persistent problem has been the tension between a desire to maintain a level of continuity on the board whilst ensuring that the company retains a democratic structure as the primary basis for decision-making. There is no statutory requirement specified by either the EU or the Irish government for LEADER or Partnership groups to rotate board members⁴², and indeed, the handbook for the LDP specifically recommends the value of continuity. The following extract from an interview with the Chief Executive of the company encapsulates this dilemma:

PC: How do the forums actually operate?

--: Oh, they're very interesting. There's a nominating procedure from all community groups who are registered with the company, and then each group is entitled to one vote. We elect the

⁴² Although in the case of LEADER, annual rotation is encouraged.

representatives on a PR basis as well. They're very interesting, very democratic...In order to preserve continuity in the voluntary sector, only one member would be liable for the election each year on a rotational basis- the first time, we just pulled them out of a hat [to decide who would be the first to face election]- and the others will be re-nominated from the relevant groups. *In view of the re-nomination status of the social partners, we recommend to the board that the voluntary sector representatives keep coming on, or they'll lose their strength and their experience on the board.*⁴³

With only one member facing election each year, this means that a community sector representative could, in theory, sit on the board continuously for nine years without being replaced, five years longer than the actual life-span of the two initiatives. Whilst there are a number of benefits of preserving continuity, not least the time taken by new board members to become familiar with the intricacies of EU funding and the fact that they are entitled to undertake training schemes sponsored by the programme, there are also dangers as well. Of these, the most obvious is related to the degree of representation that a particular board member is able to offer to community groups in their forum area, since in the case of an individual who has lost the support of their constituency, the lack of any procedure for replacing them on the board could lead to a breakdown in the relationship between the company and the local population. Unfortunately, such a circumstance appears to have arisen in the case of the North Forum of the DLDC, which is no longer operating.⁴⁴

The area is represented by two community electees, both of whom have been members of the board of directors since the company was first established. Disagreements between these individuals and others who are involved in a number of local development groups in the area appear to be the principal catalyst for the collapse of the Forum. The following is an extract from a letter sent by a manager of a community group to the chief executive officer of the DLDC, and is included here in order to illustrate the nature of such

⁴³ Interview with CEO of DLDC, 6th. February 1997.

⁴⁴ The importance of maintaining local representation on LEADER boards is discussed at length by Kearney et al in their evaluation of LEADER I. They note that in many cases, the degree of representation offered by some groups was unsatisfactory:

...it is not always clear how democratic the structure is on the ground. Moreover it is not always clear where the 'bottom-up' model starts and ends. 'Bottom-up' in many cases only appears to extent to the board and not downwards into the community (1995: 42).

disputes.

On behalf of the --, I hereby formally require clarification from the board of DLDC in relation to number of issues which have emerged in our area, in particular, its relationship with the North Forum.

On --, I consulted with you by telephone regarding strategy, supports and initiatives being taken by DLDC in relation to childcare. I was informed that these issues would be addressed when the women's networker was appointed and that community groups would be consulted and a bottom up approach effected.

Needless to say the appointment took longer than anticipated but we have since met Ms. --, and are very happy to see that networking is being undertaken. What we are not happy about is that there is allegedly no funding available within your remit. Could you please clarify *who* has decided how the LDP money is to be spent and is there any point in our group attending any meetings with either the North Forum or your representatives, if decisions of this nature has already been taken?

We understood decisions would be made by community voluntary groups on the ground, but it now appears this is not the case and our valuable time is being wasted. Our attention was recently brought to a childcare strategy, paper and approach by members of your board who have at *no* time consulted with the North Forum in this regard. Why should the North Forum meet when decisions are being taken without *any* consultation with community groups?

The North Forum have for the past few months been discussing the idea of *locally* based support workers. We have recently been informed that the DLDC have or/are in the process of employing community link workers to fill this role. Our North Forum and community groups have not been informed or consulted. Is this latest initiative going to result in workers being imposed on community groups without their consultation or support?

/.../

In regard to board members we recommend that a code of conduct be instigated. Board members should not wear *one hat in Letterkenny and*

another locally. A more global approach must be taken to community development and social inclusion. If board members do not have an understanding of these matters then they should receive some training, advice or guidelines before becoming involved in major decisions, which should be made in any case following consultation with either their Forum or working group.

Please bring our displeasure about the non participative nature of decision making that is being implemented [sic], and advise how you plan to address our concerns as otherwise we see no benefit in meeting at North Forum level in the future.⁴⁵

This letter also hints at the concerns held by many people involved in community groups surrounding the decision by the DLDC to operate both the LEADER and Local Development Programmes under the auspices of only one main board. As we have seen, each initiative incorporates a highly distinctive focus, with the LEADER programme generally perceived to be concerned only with actions in the economic sphere and the LDP, in contrast, concentrating on the social dimensions of development funding. This dichotomy of agenda and approach is such that the two initiatives could be regarded as contradicting, rather than complementing, one another. Moreover, the relative backgrounds of the majority of community representatives on the board tend to lend weight to the view that LEADER (and therefore predominantly economic-orientated activities) is the principal guiding force of the DLDC's operation.⁴⁶

Of the nine people who constitute this sector, five are involved in managing business enterprises in the county. Of these, three have sat on the board from its inception and are the longest-serving representatives on the committee. The chairperson of the DLDC during 1997 was a former board member of Springboard 2000 and, together with her husband, owns the only supermarket and post office in Raphoe. She is also a leading figure in the

⁴⁵ All emphases in original.

⁴⁶ The general emphasis upon entrepreneurship is a characteristic which LEADER shares with most of the other EU programmes operating presently in Ireland. This introduces important questions surrounding the degree to which enterprise can be relied upon to generate economic growth which benefits all sectors of the population. Moreover, if Keating and Desmond's (1993) somewhat ethnocentric view- that Ireland's persistent underdevelopment is due to a fundamental absence of an "entrepreneurial culture"- is to be believed, then clearly programmes such as LEADER are unlikely to succeed in their objectives in the long term. Perhaps a more realistic prediction would be that they are only likely to be of benefit to those with access to readily-available capital to utilise as matching funding. (This issue will be discussed in more detail in chapter five, section VI.2).

Irish Countrywomen's Association nationally, being elected as its chairperson in 1997. Her role on the board is as a representative of the Raphoe Economic Development Association. The occupations of the other three board members involved in business activities are: the manager of a large bed-and-breakfast establishment in the north of the county, who is involved with a local Tidy Towns Committee and playgroup, the owner of a car-dealership and the manager of a night-club.

Importantly, all of the five representatives from the private sector describe themselves as being "very bottom-up", although their particular conception of the meaning of this term varies greatly from what, one suspects, is envisaged by the EU. When questioned, they usually refer to the fact that they know a lot of people in the county on a personal level, and are therefore in a better position than others to judge the merits of grant applications because they are able to make an assessment based on the "track record" of a potential promoter. In the case of one of the individuals, for example, her definition of bottom-up development was expressed to me thus:

We are on the ground, we know everyone in [this] sector and know what they've been like as businesspeople in the past. It's all very bottom up, you know.⁴⁷

This type of interpretation is often treated dismissively by other people involved in development groups, however, particularly those who live in the same area as a member of the board. One of my informants, who runs a resources centre in a small town, berated a DLDC representative who lived nearby by saying,

She's not bottom-up at all, she knows nothing about what goes on in this town. How could she? She's in business, all she's concerned about is putting a few pounds away in the bank.

In the words of another, the manager of a local development co-operative:

These business people- they wouldn't recognise community

⁴⁷ Given that the majority of grants distributed under LEADER have been for private sector initiatives, there is a danger that board members could use their influence on the board to block applications which may lead to competition with their own businesses. There is absolutely no evidence that this has occurred in the case of the DLDC, however.

development if it slapped them in the face.

Such sentiments are commonly held by those who work with, or are employed by, voluntary and community groups around the county.

These competing claims to be “the bottom”, if they can be characterised as such, serve to illuminate a fundamental point regarding the differences between the model of the “community” as it is used by the EU, and the reality of what the term means on the ground in Donegal.⁴⁸ In the eyes of many people involved in community development activities (particularly those who work in the sectoral interest groups described above), the fact that the majority of individuals who constitute the community/voluntary sector on the DLDC board are from a business background automatically negates their right to describe themselves as being in any way representative of the “community”. The private sector is conceived as a distinctive and separate entity, physically removed from the ambit of the latter by virtue of the ideological values which underpin its mode of operation. Indeed, one could reasonably posit a series of binary oppositions to illustrate the way in which “community” and “business” are opposed by many people involved in community and sectoral interest groups in Donegal:

Profit-making : charity :: individualism : collectivity :: competition : mutual aid :: self-help : communitarianism :: patronage : democracy :: exclusion : inclusion.

In the case of the meeting of the Community Workers Co-operative described above, the contraposition of these organising concepts was highlighted on a number of occasions by the participants. The description of economics as a “dirty word”, a comment which was included in the introduction and provided an overall paradigm for the meeting, may therefore have greater significance than a mere expression of contrasting development priorities. One might suggest that this statement could be interpreted in structuralist terms, in the sense that it is reflecting an almost *physical* separation of economic (and therefore business) activity from the arena of “community” (development), an action which “dirties” the former by virtue of its interstitial status, geographically located within the “community” and yet lying

⁴⁸ This theme will be explored in greater depth in the chapters which follow.

ideologically apart from it.

Whilst not wishing to over-interpret the data, the tension which exists between economic and community development activity in Donegal, manifested by the level of organisational fragmentation and reflected in social discourse, is the key factor which unites the employees of certain agencies and sectoral interest groups in opposition to others which have a different philosophy towards the process. Furthermore, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that this tension underpins the way development is organised (or disorganised) throughout the country.⁴⁹ And in the case of the DLDC, this tension is further compounded through, firstly, the company's implementation of two EU programmes which, for many, are diametrically opposed in terms of their underlying approaches, and secondly, the principle of partnership, which has brought together a group of people with contrasting views of the nature and meaning of development activity. This is the issue to which this discussion will now turn.

V.2. Dimensions of Partnership: Internal and External Perspectives.

The majority of the individuals who sit on the DLDC board regard it as an "ideal type" model of partnership in action. In interviews, they all emphasised the fact that decisions at sub-panel and board level are made largely by consensus, with votes very rarely being taken, and pointed out how well participants "get on" together on a social level.

For the five community/voluntary representatives with a background in private business, the concept of partnership provides them with the opportunity for regular face-to-face contact with the County Manager, as well as senior individuals from professional agencies and government

⁴⁹ By way of illustration, this tension emerged during the conferences organised as part of the consultative process for the Peace and Reconciliation Programme. The Handbook of the Peace and Reconciliation states in its introduction:

There was one very significant divergence within the consultation exercise on the nature of actions meriting most expenditure. This was between the Productive Investment/Industrial Development workshops and the others....The divergence here was between those for whom the immediate priority was to regenerate the economy so providing the conditions of growth necessary to underpin peace, reconciliation and inclusiveness and those for whom this particular Community Initiative should pursue Social Inclusion directly. Both groups felt that this priority should take the lion's share of resources. This division emerged as the most significant, substantive issue which still required resolution through further consultation and reflection. This was not an argument about ends however. Even though the language of each discourse was profoundly different, this was essentially about means: how best to pursue peace and reconciliation. While supporting Social Inclusion as both a priority and a horizontal theme, the Productive Investment/Industrial Development workshop saw as their own priority as the most effective means to attain these goals. They argued that this initiative must address economic issues as well. They would not appear content to look at other Initiatives for assistance. They were clear that peace gave new opportunities for investment and hence for peace, reconciliation and inclusion (CEC1995: 16-17).

departments in Donegal. The fact that they therefore have continuous access to a wealth of up-to-date information concerning EU funding (such as new programme announcements, the rules and regulations surrounding the process, or changes in board membership, for example) places them in a highly privileged position, since the distribution of information within and beyond the development arena as a whole is often conducted in a piecemeal manner and is tightly controlled. Indeed, these board members tend to operate as “information brokers” for their own areas, fielding enquiries about grant-aid or new initiatives and acting as the first point of contact for the company. A number of them stated in interviews that they would regularly visit people in the surrounding district who intended to apply for grant-aid in order to evaluate the likely success of an application, or to suggest another agency who could assist a project promoter. That this occurs is unsurprising: most people in small towns and villages in Donegal know each other on a personal level, and as someone once put it to me “gossip is the most important part of community development”. However, given that local social organisation in Donegal is often characterised by profound divisions, it would indeed be surprising for this small band of individuals not to be influenced in some way by their own particular vision of the development process or perhaps by their opinion of the people living around them, and *always* to act in an impartial and objective manner in assessing the merits of potential funding applications.⁵⁰ This represents perhaps the most significant danger associated with the partnership approach and systems of participative democracy in general.

In common with these businesspeople, the state representatives also have an extremely positive view of the way in which the concept of partnership operates within the company. By way of reminder, this sector comprises six appointees, drawn from the NWHB, the VEC, FÁS, Teagasc, the Department of Social Welfare, together with the County Manager, all of whom have sat on the board since its inception. As well as being directors of the DLDC, a number of these individuals are also board members of various other local development groups in the county, including Inishowen Rural Development Ltd., the Inishowen Partnership Company, MFG, the County Enterprise Board,

⁵⁰ Kearney et al briefly address this issue in relation to LEADER I. In a survey of promoters, they discovered that 41% of them knew LEADER personnel personally prior to receiving funding. Whilst their failure to develop this point in any detail represents a major drawback from their study, the authors do admit that this represents “quite a high percentage”, and that the “situation is clearly positive from the perspective of ‘animation’ but it does raise the potential problem of clientelism” (1995: 93). (See chapter three, section IV. This issue is also discussed below, pp. 151-154). Their use of the term “animation” in this context also draws attention to the variable ways in which it is used.

the Task Force and the County Strategy Group. Their perception of the value of the partnership approach is exemplified in part by their rather uncritical assessment of the role of community representatives, something illustrated by the following comments from two of the state appointees:

They're local people, you see, and they often know the people who are applying, their track records and so on. And it's particularly useful for us State people to have them on the board, because it gets us closer to the consumer and the ground...It's part of a wider shift towards participatory democracy, and we've recently set up committees in the NWHB which use the partnership principle.⁵¹

I don't believe that people who come out from the communities, after an initial adjustment time, feel in any way 'swamped' on the board. You see, the board doesn't work as sides, I think it's important to understand that, and most of the statutory people wouldn't want to be in a situation where they were paternalistic. In other words, where the statutory and state people sat on one side of the room and the social partners and the community groups were on the other side. It doesn't work that way, and it shouldn't work that way, because there's an effort at instilling the ethos of the partnership into the board of the partnership from the beginning.⁵²

As we have seen, Donegal Creameries was instrumental in securing the LEADER and Local Development Programmes for the eastern region of the county, and many of these state appointees praised the role of the Co-operative in acting as an "honest broker" during the process of establishing the company. As one of them put it:

They had that rural development tradition, you see; they were the players who gave it a legitimacy in rural areas.

The primary motivating factor behind the decision of Donegal Creameries

⁵¹ It may be noted that there is a distinct similarity between this comment and that of Craig and McKeown reproduced in chapter three, note 29. Both exemplify the general tendency towards "compartmentalised objectification", and the conflation of representation and role, in the professional discourse of development in Ireland, discussed in section IV.2 of the previous chapter.

⁵² The term "come out" is, one might suggest, highly significant in this context, neatly encapsulating the general view of partnership held by the state representatives I talked to in Donegal. In this conception, whilst the community is imagined as a tangible, readily discernable entity, it is spatially amorphous, and most certainly not the place in which they themselves live.

to become involved in applying for EU funding stemmed from the strong ideological commitment to local development held by the Chief Executive Officer of the company, who has himself been active in progressing various projects for a number of years through his participation in a group established in the south of the county- Erne Enterprise- (of which he was the chairman during 1997), as well as Springboard 2000. As alluded to in chapter two, Donegal has a strong co-operative tradition, and Donegal Creameries itself was formed from the amalgamation of a number of smaller co-ops, including the Creeslough society described by Jonathan Bell. Although Donegal Creameries became a PLC in 1996, the company retains a co-operative structure, with a wide shareholding base among local farmers and a “one man-one vote” system of electing members to the board of management, and it was this ethic of co-operativism which underpinned their involvement in LEADER II:

I suppose really I held the view to a degree that we came from a co-operative background and should play a greater role- at least initially- in the development of a company which would tender for the rights to deliver the LEADER II programme in County Donegal...Really we were doing it to reflect the support of the Donegal Creameries’ board for the concept of LEADER and what it in turn represented, and we just wanted to be sure that the ship was steered properly for the first year or two...And it’s working exceptionally well, I’m pleased to say.⁵³

Unsurprisingly, given the nature of his occupation and his prominent role in IBEC, the Chief Executive views the stimulation of enterprise as the principal component of the DLDC’s remit, and the core of the development process in general. His own group, Erne Enterprise, is specifically focused upon job-creation, and has created the first Local Enterprise Network⁵⁴ in the country, centred on the towns of Ballyshannon, Bundoran and Donegal Town.

In this way, the two employees of Donegal Creameries (representing IBEC in the social partners section), the six state appointees, along with the five business people, all hold a similarly positive opinion of the way in which

⁵³ Interview with CEO, Donegal Creameries.

⁵⁴ Local Enterprise Networks are designed to connect businesses, entrepreneurs and potential employees with one another within a defined geographical area.

partnership operates within the DLDC. From the perspective of many of those involved in local development groups, however, this type of view simply serves to highlight the fact that the DLDC reflects the traditional vessels of power in the county, something exemplified by the way in which it is organised internally. The chairperson of the board, together with the chairs of the three sub-panels, the secretary and treasurer of the DLDC and the County Manager all sit on another sub-group (the "Policy and Rules Committee"), which is responsible for co-ordinating the overall strategy of the two programmes. According to a number of my informants, this committee represents the heart of the company, at which most major decisions are taken, and is something that has not only reinforced the emphasis upon economic activities, but has also had the effect of concentrating power in the hands of a relatively small group of people. The salience of this view was confirmed for many when the number of community representatives was reduced by three in late 1996. In light of the guidelines provided in the handbook for the LDP, which state that "no one sector will have a greater number of places on the board than the combination of the other two sectors" (ADM Ltd. 1995: 11), the move aroused suspicion among many community activists. In the words of one of my informants, who chairs a development group in the south of the county:

O.K., they might *say* it's because the board was unwieldy or whatever, but the *effect* has been to reduce the community reps from each [Forum] area by a third, so they're now massively outnumbered by the others and have no real influence, none at all. The board just reflects and reinforces the vested power interests in the country.⁵⁵

Furthermore, whilst the Area Action Plan submitted by the company as part of the application process for the LDP stated that the board was restructured in order to "increase the representation of disadvantaged groups"⁵⁶, this

⁵⁵ By way of balance, this type of view is very much at odds with that held by some of those involved in the DLDC. The Chief Executive of the VEC characterised the reason for the change in the following terms:

P: What was the motivation for reducing the number of community sector reps on the board?

SO'L: It wasn't *motivation* at all. The board were *required* by ADM...to reduce the representation from all groups to specified maximums to bring it into line with other groups in the country. If I can put it to you this way [laughs], it wasn't a case of the state ganging up on the social partners or community groups, it was just basically imposed on us.

⁵⁶ Donegal Local Development Company. *Area Action Plan (1996-2000)*. Submitted to ADM Ltd., 4th. April 1996: 17.

does not appear to have occurred: the board has no representation from the unemployed, the elderly, youth, travellers or people with disabilities, for example, which constitute the specified target populations as outlined in the programme handbook.⁵⁷ Additionally, the board's structure does not conform to the government's requirements on gender balance (at least 40% of either gender)⁵⁸, with only 6 out of the 22 members being female. Both of these facts have served to exacerbate the disquiet felt by those operating outside the DLDC regarding the company's claim to be implementing the EU's model of partnership.

In an admittedly extreme variation of this general attitude, certain individuals also believe that the company "is in the pocket of the Mafia", a reference to the Fianna Fáil hegemony in Donegal.⁵⁹ The DLDC is linked to the Local Authority through the involvement of three members of the Policy and Rules Committee on the CSG and the Task Force, as well as via the County Manager, and the fact that councillors also sit on these committees is, for some observers, confirmation enough that the company acts to protect vested political, as well as economic, interests.⁶⁰ As someone once put it to me:

What you have to realise is that most decisions made in this county are to keep those in power in power. Nothing makes sense unless you look at it through the prism of politics, and politics in this county means Fianna Fáil.

One manifestation of this attitude is a general tendency to regard the allocation of grant aid as being governed by personalism: on numerous occasions during my fieldwork, I was assured by various members of community groups that funding for certain projects was made because "such and such

⁵⁷ According to the Combat Poverty Agency's own handbook on establishing partnerships, aimed specifically at Partnership Group funded under the LDP, all boards "should involve people from the local area particularly those who experience disadvantage and for whom involvement will encourage their empowerment both as individuals and as members of a community" (Combat Poverty Agency 1995: 7).

⁵⁸ ADM Ltd. 1995: 11.

⁵⁹ This will be discussed in more detail in chapter seven.

⁶⁰ On one occasion when talking to someone involved in a local development group I happened to mention that I was intending to visit a small village on the outskirts of Letterkenny. Her response typifies the degree of suspicion surrounding the professional development sector held by those active outside it:

Oh, you can find out what is going on for us down there- there's something very dodgy happening with [name of company]. You know, they received a grant of £30,000 from the CEB only last week, and then yesterday, we heard it had been taken over by Donegal Creameries, who bought its shares for £1 each. Peanuts! Its the Fianna Fáil Mafia coming back again, you know. It's all the same people sitting on the boards. You've got the CEB and then the DLDC, which is the Creameries, and, well, it's not difficult to see what's happened...

knows such and such”, or “sits on such a board”. This has created difficulty for development agencies themselves, in their attempts to maintain the appearance of neutrality in funding decisions, and, for this reason, some agencies have actively cut back on the number of individual projects they support.⁶¹

Of course, it is impossible to corroborate the truth of allegations of personalism. Rumours concerning the value of personal relationships in the distribution of resources circulate constantly in the county, and most are probably groundless.⁶² Nor is it really necessary: the important point to note is that those individuals who see themselves as disenfranchised, and therefore excluded from taking an active role in the implementation of EU programmes on the ground, remain highly suspicious of the motivations of those who are, or appear to be, “in power” in Donegal.

So what of the remaining members of the board? It might be supposed that the elective forum system enables those individuals most critical of the “business ethic” of the LEADER programme and the DLDC to take up positions on the board of the company. To a certain extent this has occurred: the other four community/voluntary sector representatives are all vocal opponents of the emphasis placed upon private enterprise within the DLDC. However, the situation is complicated by the fact that two of the four occupy positions of significant status within the development sector in the county through their involvement in other organisations. By way of illustration, one is a community health worker employed by the North Western Health Board, who is also a leading figure in the Donegal Community Workers Co-operative (and the CWC nationally) as well as being a member of the national monitoring committee of the Peace and Reconciliation Programme. The other is the wife of the acting county engineer, a member of the County Enterprise Board, the administrator of the DCWC and the secretary of the Donegal Labour Party.

⁶¹ In the case of the IRDL, for instance, the board has taken a decision not to grant-aid any tourist accommodation schemes, which may be interpreted as a somewhat radical step in light of the level of funding this sector has attracted under both LEADER programmes nationally in recent years. (In contrast to the IRDL, the DLDC has directed a significant proportion of its budget to such schemes: see Appendix Seven). In the words of the chief executive officer of IRDL:

We've had over 50 enquiries about accommodation premises, and it's absolutely impossible for us to assist even a fraction of them with the budget we have...Our total LEADER budget for everything, which is what has come in for four years, we could have spent on accommodation every year with the amount of enquiries we've had...A lot of them are quite genuine people wanting to do Bed and Breakfast, but having said that, how do you pick one? O.K., we might say we're going to support three through LEADER, and its you, you and you, but explain that to their neighbours who weren't picked, you know?.

⁶² I use the word “most” advisedly here, for reasons that will become clear in chapter seven.

Both of these individuals have substantial contact with community groups through their involvement with the DCWC and East Forum (through which they were appointed to the board), and view their role as acting as a counterweight to the stress upon economic grant-aid by championing the ethos of the LDP within the company. Whilst their occupations make it difficult for them to claim that they are also championing “bottom-up” development, they regard themselves as spokespersons for the disadvantaged in Donegal society and very much as “outsiders” on the main board. And, in contrast to the business people, they take a rather different view of the way in which the partnership principle has been implemented by the company. Another member of this quartet, who is chairman of a local community group, is entirely dismissive of the company’s operation, and characterises his role on the board as “screaming blue murder at the other members”.

This group have an ally in the form of one of the two Trade Union representatives, who describes himself as an “agitator” and “upsetter of the status quo”. As a lecturer at the RTC, branch secretary of the local Teachers’ Union, founder of the ICTU’s Centre for the Unemployed in Letterkenny, and a prominent member of the local Labour party, his perception of development is strongly coloured by his political and ideological beliefs. In his view, the LEADER programme is actively exacerbating the problems faced by many disadvantaged people in Irish society, as it has essentially been of benefit only to those individuals who are already in possession of substantial capital to utilise as matching funding. He is particularly critical of the amount of funds which have been directed by the DLDC towards the tourism accommodation sector in Donegal, something which he regards as a “complete waste of money”. In early 1997, he was appointed as the chairman of one of the sub-panels on the board, in order to, in his words, “keep him in line”. He has experienced several “run ins” with other board members in the past and was on one occasion threatened with suspension by the Policy and Rules Committee, on the grounds of his outspoken opposition to the strategy the company was implementing:

It was only my skills as a Trade Union negotiator that got me through this, as I was in a minority of one.⁶³

There are thus two distinct groups within the DLDC board which view the

main purposes of, and approach to development (indeed, the very meaning of the term) in very different ways. It might be argued that, given the contrasting emphasis of the two programmes, this is a positive advantage for the purposes of administration, allowing the effective delivery of them both in a single board structure. However, as was alluded to earlier, there is a distinct perception throughout the development sector in Donegal- among politicians, community groups and those involved in other agencies- that the DLDC is concerned only with LEADER II. Indeed, the company is often referred to as the “agritourism agency” by local authority and state representatives, even those who actually sit on the board. This is perhaps inevitable, since the distribution of grant-aid attracts a far higher-profile, and is more readily measurable in quantitative terms, than the implementation of strategic initiatives, which the LDP strand of the company’s remit has so far been focused upon.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the general suspicion of private enterprise among the community development sector, one element of Eipper’s “Ruling Trinity”, complicates the task of the DLDC in generating popular support for its activities. The fact that the company also incorporates substantial representation from one of the other two sectors of the Trinity, the State, serves only to exacerbate further this general problem.

VI. Summary and Conclusions.

In this chapter we have highlighted the structural and social bases for the organisation of professional development activity in Donegal. We have argued that whilst the programmatic nature of EU development funding has been responsible for the creation of a fragmented approach to the process at local levels, social factors have also been crucial in compounding the divisions which exist between various groups involved in the bureaucratic arena of development activity. We have also discussed the way in which the discourse of the EU has been adopted and applied by those involved in the administration of Structural Fund initiatives, something which represents an expression of the ideological links existing between them and the EU

⁶³ Perhaps surprisingly, his views are not supported by his colleague in the social partners section, who works as a night-shift worker at Unifi, a large textile plant in Letterkenny. He has represented the largest trade Union in Ireland, SIPTU, on the DLDC board since late 1995, and is extremely positive about the ethos of partnership and the DLDC’s strategy. He does, however, describe his own position on the committee as “strange” and “hard to define”, something that he asserts is principally because of the novel experience of working side-by-side with IBEC members. He argues that the job of the ICTU representatives on the board is to ensure that “the projects we are grant-aiding are paying the right level of wages to people”, although he concedes that this is almost impossible to enforce.

⁶⁴ Grants for community development groups under the LDP did not begin to be distributed until 1998.

itself. In many cases, this has occurred at the expense of relationships with other members of the development community within Donegal. The case-studies describing the meeting of the Community Workers' Co-operative and the implementation of the LEADER II and Local Development Programmes have also illustrated the fundamental importance of the EU for professional development activity in the county, the structural and ideological relationships which have been developed between this sector and the wider organisation providing an important insight into the nature of European Integration as it is occurring in one particular county, in one particular member state in the late 1990s.

The data outlined in this chapter suggest a "segmentary" aspect to the relationship between the various groups which constitute the Professional Development Sector in Donegal. On one level, the sector as a whole acts as a uniform body in their opposition to local politicians, witnessed by the exclusion of the latter from boards of management of the various EU programmes. However, those involved in sectoral interest groups, such as the members of the Community Workers' Co-operative, are often critical of the activities of EU development agencies for what they perceive as an over-emphasis upon enterprise and a lack of concern with "social inclusion" and "disadvantage". Sectoral interest groups see themselves as working for the "community", and indeed, usually refer to their own organisations as "community groups". This tendency is repeated nationally, where the "community platform" has emerged as an important partner in government policy-making, represented on inter-departmental committees, on the Regional Monitoring Committees of each EU Programme and the CSF as a whole, and on the boards of management of semi-state organisations such as ADM Ltd. and the Combat Poverty Agency.⁶⁵ Organisations such as the Community Workers' Co-operative, Irish Rural Link, the European Anti-Poverty Network (Ireland), the National Women's Coalition, the Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed, the National Youth Federation, Focus Ireland and the Community Action Network are all involved in various capacities in lobbying government and making submissions as part of strategic policy initiatives. However, questions surround the degree to which this sector can genuinely claim to represent the interests of the enormous number of area-based groups, which rely almost entirely upon voluntarism and whose

⁶⁵ For an overview of the role of the community platform in national policy-making, see Crowley (1996) and Harvey (1996: 143-8)

understanding of the purpose and meaning of development is often very different from that of development professionals.⁶⁶ In the following chapter, these differences will be highlighted when we turn to consider the role of area-based groups in the development process in Donegal.

To a large degree, the reason why so many disparate organisations have become involved in the administration of EU local development programmes on the ground is due to the fluidity of the philosophy underpinning the process of EU development planning itself. Terms such as “subsidiarity”, “bottom-up(ness)”, “partnership” and “social exclusion” are understood and utilised in many different ways by members of the professional development sector in Donegal, ways which usually correspond to the particular ideological perspective of the nature of the development process itself held by each constituent group within it. In this way, just as certain members of the board of the DLDC see their own organisation as a model of partnership and “bottom-up development” in action, so those people who are observing the company from the outside regard it as entirely dichotomous to their own perception of the meaning of this term.

Viewed from this angle, then, the EU is, above all else, a symbolic system, capable of being manipulated and reified according to pre-conceived ideas of how society is constructed, and how social change should be pursued. For some, it represents a counterpoint to the power of national government, a force for good in an increasingly boundaryless world. For others, it is an economic “pot of gold”, fuelling the growth of the “Celtic Tiger” and generating almost unlimited opportunities for wealth-creation and self-advancement. Similarly, whilst many see EU development programmes as the principal means of alleviating structures of poverty and inequality in Ireland, others argue that its activities are actively exacerbating these problems. As always, the truth is not simple and exists in many different versions. What is clear, however, is that the EU is not a neutral category in the Ireland of the present-day, and it is surely this which represents the

⁶⁶ Similar observations to this were noted by Breathnach, in his analysis of Gaeltacht co-operatives. His principal conclusion was that:

...while the comharchumainn [community development co-ops] have attracted extensive community goodwill, they have largely failed to transcend the communication gap which appear to develop between organisations- no matter how localised and well-intentioned- and their ‘client’ populations. For those who view development in the sense of an increase in general living standards in the community, this latter aspect is largely irrelevant. However, for those- including a large proportion of those involved in initiating the comharchumainn- who see the development process in a wider sense, of which a key element is popular participation spread throughout the community, this finding will be of some concern (1984: 90).

main conclusion that we should take forward from the data presented here.

Along with the key terms of EU development planning which we have concentrated upon thus far, there is another which has been telegraphed throughout this chapter and chapter three, and is perhaps of even greater significance for the purposes of this study: "community". In the next chapter, the nature of the understanding of this term by those involved in local voluntary groups in the county will be explored in detail, in order to illuminate further the relationship between the EU's discourse of development and that held by the indigenous population of Donegal.

Chapter Five.

Community Groups in County Donegal.

I. Introduction.

In chapter three, we presented an overview of the history of EU-sponsored local development in Ireland, and noted how the term “community” has been used in the discourse of professional development planning. The previous chapter illustrated some of the difficulties associated with the application of “partnership” in Donegal, caused in part by the existence of competing claims to representation in EU development agencies. In this chapter, we confront the issue of community “head on”, as it were, by examining the role of voluntary community groups in the development process.

The OED defines “community” variously as “all the people living in a specific locality; a specific locality, including its inhabitants; a body of people having a religion, a profession, etc. in common; fellowship of interests etc.; similarity; a monastic, socialistic, etc. body practising common ownership; joint ownership or liability; the public”. This etymological amalgam is reflected in the academy, where “community” has long represented a problematic term for social scientists on both a semantic and empirical level (Cohen 1985: 11). Tönnies’ three conceptions of *Gemeinschaft* (which may be roughly translated as community)- by blood, place and mind- have long been overtaken by increasingly sophisticated analyses of what the concept actually means, but it would probably be true to say that the understanding of the term has advanced little further since Tönnies’ day.¹ As early as 1955, Hillery had identified ninety-four different definitions of the term across the sociological and anthropological literature, and over a century after Tönnies’ seminal work was published, Abercrombie was moved to remark that “the term community is one of the most elusive and vague in Sociology and it is now largely without specific meaning” (1988: 25). Just as the word “tribe” was discarded many years ago, on the grounds of its status as an externally-imposed category, with origins firmly rooted in the colonial era, so “community”, if employed uncritically, has come to be viewed as a descriptive

¹ See, for example, the definition prided by Karp et al (1977: 65), in which the authors define community in terms of a shared geographic space, a common set of values and sustained social interaction. (Cited in Gaetz 1992: 92-93)

label manifestly lacking in analytical rigour. Formerly coterminous and interchangeable with other nouns such as “settlement”, “population”, “group”, etc., it is now difficult to apply the term with any degree of impunity without an accompanying explanation of what, exactly, is being defined, who is doing the defining, and the explicit meaning its use is intended to convey.

Such semantic uncertainties have been thrown into sharp relief in recent years by a marked increase in the use of the term “community” in western European popular discourse. The term, perhaps more than any other, has become a general rubric for the zeitgeist associated with late- (or post-) modernity (itself a rather imprecise and ethnocentric phrase), symbolising, among other phenomena, the decline of the nation-state, the rationale of individualism and “social responsibility”, the uncertainties associated with globalisation, and the end of the era of the welfare economy, and has virtually superseded “society” as a metaphor for social organisation. In contrast to the way the term is now employed in the academy, however, the application of the term in the discourses of politicians and the media is distinguished, above all, by an impassive acceptance of the porosity of its definitional parameters², to the extent that the actual meaning communicated by the word has become diluted almost to the point of complete obscurity.³

These themes are perhaps most saliently expressed with reference to the development arena, in which notions of the “community”, and tensions surrounding its meaning, are of crucial importance in the understanding of social processes underlying development actions. The concept is distinguished- in Ireland, as much as anywhere else- by both the fluidity of its definition and its importance as an anchoring mechanism for development activity on whatever level it may be operating, and in this way, may be viewed as a highly powerful symbolic resource for the organisation of voluntary action. It is clear, then, that the term “community group”, the focus for this discussion, is not an analytically neutral category. On the contrary, it represents a highly contested social field, and is understood in a

² In this, I am echoing the view of Crow and Allen, who state that “community implies the management, control and manipulation of local people by higher-level state bodies” (1994: 15).

³ In the view of O’Carroll:

We have in recent years seen the appearance of community schools, community radio, community councils, community development associations, community candidates, community representatives, community social work, community medicine, community psychiatry, community games and, the most recent candidate for this magic prefix, community policing (1985: 137).

multitude of different ways by various actors in the development process, the meaning of the term varying widely according to the discursive context in which it is used.

As was alluded to in chapter one, on a global level, the participation of “target” populations is increasingly being recognised as a highly significant factor in the success or otherwise of externally-administered development projects, and the ideology of most of the major agencies is now geared towards the creation of structures and procedures which allow an input from local people in the design and implementation of initiatives. In Ireland, the dominant paradigm of EU development planning, incorporating the principles of “partnership” and “bottom-up development”, has created new opportunities for local organisations to become involved in decision-making activities which were previously the exclusive preserve of politicians or agents of the State. “Community-led development” has thus become one of the central axes around which the rhetoric of professional development planning is organised, and the “community group” a *sine qua non* in the discourses of both the political and professional development sectors, viewed as the driving force behind development activity and the primary agent of change.

However, as we have highlighted previously, the bureaucracy is an arena in which the relationship between theory and practice is often indistinct, and “community” is a conveniently positive term, drawing with it connotations of inclusiveness and egalitarianism. In certain contexts, reflecting the way it is used in the political sphere, it therefore provides a means by which the reality of local social organisation can be disguised under the rubric of an all-embracing conceptual label, bridging the gap between the professed aim to develop systems in which local consultation and participation are prioritised, and a set of bureaucratic structures which often serve to militate against the actual execution of such (laudable) objectives.

On a local level, the use of the term is rather different, since it is used not to suppress meaning, but as a method for the construction of social boundaries through which notions of self identity, local competition, and perceptions of place are organised. People do, in fact, live in communities, but what they themselves recognise as their own community may differ significantly from that held by policy-makers, or indeed, other people living around them:

ideas of what communities *should* be are usually far removed from what they actually *are*.

This mismatch is often the focus for tensions and disputes between different types of organisations, manifested around the broad issue of areal representation. By way of explanation, the fragmented nature of voluntary development activity in Donegal means that each village or townland usually contains a number of associations which would classify themselves as “community development groups”, their activities often overlapping to a marked degree. The veracity of claims to “be” a community group is often judged by how “close” a group is, or appears to be, to “the community”, something which is measured in turn with reference to such factors as how the term is actually defined, the activities which the group is involved in, the number of public meetings held, the level of voluntary participation, the relative background and status of the individuals involved, and the length of time a group has been established.

We have argued in previous chapters that, just as it is impossible to understand the processes which govern development actions without reference to underlying social structures and relationships, development also represents a valuable “prism” through which to observe different aspects of social life. This maxim forms a principal axis for this discussion, in which the social context of development activity as it operates on a local level is examined with reference to a number of voluntary groups in eastern Donegal. Following a short overview outlining the organisation of community development in the county, a series of ethnographic case-studies are presented, based upon participant observation and interviews with the members of voluntary groups in various areas of the region. The primary focus of the final section of the chapter surrounds a detailed theoretical analysis of the empirical data presented, with a view to deciphering the nature of the dynamic between social process and social action, the latter manifested through development activity.

II. Community Development in Donegal: a Brief Overview.

The first point to note about community development in Donegal is its sheer scale. Fuelled by an apparently limitless supply of voluntary activism, the county contains an enormous and multifarious range of community-based and voluntary organisations, to the extent that it is extremely difficult to treat them as a unitary category for the purposes of analysis. Is it actually possible to compare, for example, a local sports club with a travellers' rights group, and classify them both under the general rubric of "community development"?

The answer to this question is clearly dependent on the particular perspective one chooses to adopt and, in the way the term is understood in both the academy and policy-making circles, it would appear that it would almost certainly be "no". "Community development" in this context is usually used to describe a rather narrow range of phenomena, encompassing the application of what is generally thought of as "development" to a local level, and from this viewpoint, even the broadest definition of the term- that of "planned change"- would not allow the inclusion of the activities of, for instance, a village football team. However (and at the risk of stating the obvious), there are a number of dangers associated with attempts to mould empirical observations to fit into a pre-conceived epistemological structure. As has been demonstrated in previous chapters, one of the most fundamental conclusions that can be drawn from the way in which development is interpreted in Donegal is the *variability* of the types of activities the concept seeks to describe. Put simply, it is absolutely crucial to the indigenous understanding of what people do, and why they do it. Moreover, the particular nomenclature associated with community development in the county does not provide an adequate guide as to which particular groups should be regarded as being involved in development activity and which should not for, although many groups explicitly label themselves as "community development groups", there are many others whose members regard themselves as working in the development sector even though they do not use the actual term in the name they apply to their associations. The one over-riding characteristic which all local area-based organisations share, however, is their autonomy from the apparatus of the state and EU, and this observation, coupled with the fact that most are reliant upon voluntarism to

a greater or lesser degree, suggests that there is sufficient basis to regard local groups in Donegal as occupying a distinctive, collective niche in the development arena.

III. Drumkeen.

Drumkeen is a small village of approximately 250 people⁴, located on the main N13 road between Letterkenny and Stranolar, and roughly equidistant between the two towns. The N13 is the principal trunk route through the county, linking the north of the county with Donegal Town, Ballyshannon and the counties of Leitrim and Sligo, to the south. The majority of the population live on a small council estate; other houses are ranged up along the side of a hill, behind the estate, with a Catholic church, community hall, national school and Parochial House situated on a small plateau towards the summit. The only notable services are two general stores and a small, one-room pub lying on the outskirts of the settlement, adjacent to the main road. Although speed limit signs have recently been erected, these are rarely observed, and traffic thunders through Drumkeen almost constantly during the day and for much of the night, most drivers probably unaware that they are passing through the village at all.

III.1. The Drumkeen Development Association.

The Development Association was established in 1995 following a public meeting of the residents of the area, who were determined to “do something” about the perceived indifference of the county council towards Drumkeen. A committee was elected to oversee the administration of the association, and meetings have been held regularly since then. The group has been helped by the dynamism of the local parish priest, the Rev. Tom Curran, who plays a prominent role in many of the group’s activities, and is the main interface between the association and external organisations. Although he represents the key figure in the public life of the village, he has been careful to ensure that local people do not view the development group as something which is led by the church, and for this reason, has declined invitations to take an official position on the committee, preferring to leave this responsibility to others. His particular vision of development has,

⁴ In addition to the village, the name also encompasses the surrounding townlands. This figure refers to the population of the village only, and is an estimate, as no census data are available for the area.

however, been an important influence in shaping the nature of the various initiatives which the group has pursued since its formation.

A native of Donegal, Fr. Curran arrived in the parish in 1992, after spending a number of years in Peru working as a priest and charity worker, an experience which has strongly coloured his views of the development process. He argues that a number of parallels can be drawn between the social conditions he witnessed in Latin America and those currently evident in many parts of Ireland, with the difficulties faced by the two populations, surrounding such issues as high levels of unemployment, poor housing conditions, alcohol and drug-abuse, and a general fatalism on the part of young people, ultimately rooted in the colonial legacy which both countries share. In Fr. Curran's opinion, the particular history of Donegal is thus a crucial explanatory factor in accounting for the problems faced by many people in his own parish. Drumkeen is located about three miles from what was once the edge of the Ulster plantation, the heart of which was concentrated on the fertile lands around the Foyle basin to the north-east, and the townland was first established by landless labourers who had been forced to move from the lowlands and onto the poorer valley sides in the early years of Protestant ascendancy in the county. Many of these people (women as well as men) were employed by the farmers of the Laggan, being hired at the biannual "hiring fairs" held in Letterkenny and Strabane, a tradition which continued until the 1940s.⁵ During the nineteenth century, people began to seek work further afield, most notably as "tatty hokers" in Scotland, and the population who remained became heavily reliant upon these seasonal earnings. This was particularly true during periods of famine, which were felt hardest in upland areas, these factors combining to establish a pattern of migration and "dependency" which lasted well into the present century. For Fr. Curran, therefore, the social situation which exists in Drumkeen today is a product of a set of external forces dating back many generations, over which local people have had little or no control.

Reproduced below is an extract from the application the Drumkeen Development Association made to the Peace and Reconciliation Programme in early 1996, written by Fr. Curran. It is included here in order to illustrate his views in more detail, and also to provide a general introduction to the

⁵ For a comprehensive overview of the hiring fair system in Donegal, see O'Dowd (1995: 631-641).

We are an association of concerned citizens of this community who have banded together to further the interests of the area. Caught as we are between two centres of population, we have hitherto received little in the way of amenities from any public bodies. What we have achieved has been done mainly through our own efforts. But there are limits to what a poor rural community can do. Drumkeen is a scattered rural community settled mainly on the banks of the River Deele which flows down from the hill-top boglands on Cark Mountain to the confluence with the River Foyle. Our community is in the upper half of the valley, and on the surrounding hills the land varies from the inhospitable boglands at the top of the mountains to the richer but still very marginal land lower down.

The tide of the Ulster Plantation lapped our doors and our people were driven for survival to those poor hill-top boglands. They wrested farms from this inhospitable ground and managed to survive and raise families, but only with supplementary help of seasonal labour in the rich farms of the nearby Lagan Valley and, in more recent times, Scotland and England. Many of the children who attend our school are the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of children and youths who were hired out as “spailpin fanachs”⁶ from the hiring fairs of Letterkenny and Strabane.

There are about 400 families in the community. About 30 are centred around the village. The rest are mainly on small holdings dotted around the countryside. Electricity is available to all but a few isolated holdings. Telephones are gradually becoming more widely available. The roads are poor, water is a continuing problem, and lighting in the village is no more than rudimentary. And our cultural, educational, and recreational facilities are either non-existent or of very recent origin. There is one school, one church, one tavern and two shops. We don't appear on any map and we don't figure on anyone's plans for development. There would be few communities in Ireland, or, indeed, in Europe, that are more peripheral to the concerns of the power-brokers of the age.

⁶ This term refers to a particular class of Irish labourers, who were essentially bought and sold by landowners at the hiring fairs in the region (see O'Dowd 1991: 56).

Yet we are proud of our community and its achievements. We have by our own efforts in the past twenty years built a church, a school, a play-school and an all-weather football pitch which are the envy of many a larger community. We have produced a World Championship Accordion Band. We have a football team that has won its way into premier league soccer and currently heads that division. But at the same time we have fed the stream of emigration as our young people come of age and face a future in a community without hope of gainful employment. What employment they find is of the very vulnerable kind- unskilled labour, shop and factory jobs. A root problem is the lack of educational, cultural and/or recreational facilities. Children are expected to contribute to the family purse as soon as they come of age. This flows from and in turn generates a low regard for education beyond the most basic kind. There are historical reasons for this- disposessions, evictions and insecurity of holdings. Interest in books, reading or educational development is very low and this can only perpetuate the cycle of low achievement and vulnerable employment. Efforts are being made to counteract this by means of a playschool, youth group and embryonic attempts at adult education.

These are small beginnings, but we are hampered by our lack of resources. If we are to advance and achieve our goals we must have outside help. The survival of such small communities is, in our opinion, crucial to the identity of our nation. Our proximity to the Border and our isolated situation has had its sad consequences- an off-duty RUC man gunned down on a visit to his home near the village, an IRA bomb factory not two miles from the village and various arms finds in nearby forests. Our dreams won't solve all our problems but without them there is little hope.

This proposal is directed towards the Inclusion of People who have been marginalised by the processes of history. Of its nature it has potential benefit for all members of the community, men and women, children and adults/.. / The proposed centre will be open to all denominations and all shades of political opinion. The desire to use the facilities and the educational training programmes will be the sole criterion. Lifting the vision of the community to the wider horizons available through membership of the European Union and through development of hitherto

untapped potential of the members of the community will put in perspective the petty jealousies that can hamper the progress of peace. Developing the capacity of the members of the community to play a more constructive part in local and national affairs will release an energy that has lain dormant, or worse, has fuelled the fires of resentment towards those who have a better and more fulfilling life. The facilities will level the playing pitch for people who have been marginalised by the processes of history and will thus remove one of the root causes of jealousy and resentment.

One of the most important themes which infuses the above description surrounds the sense of isolation that the residents of Drumkeen are apparently faced with. Although the village is only six miles from the largest town in the county, and would be classified as a satellite settlement in most parts of Britain, few people have cars, and public transport is extremely limited. This perception of geographical peripherality is compounded by a perceived indifference of public bodies towards Drumkeen, something which highlights the “gap” many local people in Donegal feel exists between themselves and the priorities of the State. The language used in the description above generates an image of “boundedness”, with the external world characterised as an indistinct and amorphous concept, encapsulated in the phraseology which is employed. The community is “peripheral to the concerns of the power brokers of the age”, and must have “outside help” if it is to “survive”, the biological metaphor augmenting an overall impression of enforced marginalisation and unwanted dependence, stimulating attempts to develop greater autonomy. The fact that a number of local amenities have been built by voluntary efforts is indicative of the degree to which local residents claim shared ownership of their areas, (in this respect, it is notable in that the description above, the first person plural is used throughout), with the activities of the county council or development organisations regarded as being of only marginal significance in terms of the development of an area like Drumkeen. The church and the football pitch were built in 1990 and 1995 respectively, using finance raised through voluntary subscriptions and charity events, and have become the two most important elements in the funding of the development association’s activities, an annual draw organised by the football club raising approximately £12,000, which is supplemented by the use of funds allocated to the parish by the Catholic diocese. Similarly, the achievements of the football club and the accordion band are viewed as

fundamental aspects of development, further indications of the dynamism of the local population and examples of what can be accomplished in the absence of external help.

Four distinct themes therefore emerge from the way development is conceptualised in Drumkeen, which, taken together, may be regarded as a general paradigm for community development as it operates throughout much of the county. Firstly, there is the importance of historical processes and generational continuity, which provide an explanatory framework for the understanding of contemporary social structures, and social problems, and act as a linking mechanism for local people with their own past and that of their families. Secondly, ideas surrounding territorial ownership and belonging are highly significant factors in propagating much of the impetus behind development activity, and represent the primary motivational bases of voluntarism. Thirdly, feelings of peripherality and isolation, both geographical and allegorical, perceived and actual, serve to reify the distance between the locale and the state, generating a sense of collective autonomy in which actions are carried out within a system of almost hermetic enclosure. Finally, development is conceived as a holistic enterprise, a process which encompasses many different areas of activity and involves all sections of the community.⁷

Of the various initiatives which the development association has pursued during the past three years, the building of a Garden of Remembrance to the Irish famine, in particular, may be utilised as an exemplifier of these general themes, and will be the focus for the remainder of this section.

⁷ This particular vision of development is reflected in the applications that the development association has made to grant-aiding bodies, in which the various initiatives and planned projects have been divided into three specific areas by the group. These are summarised below.

1. Owning Our Past.

- Garden of Remembrance to the Irish Famine 1845-7.
- Collection of Local History and Folklore.

2. Appreciating Our Present.

- Refurbishment of Community Hall.
- Development of Football Grounds.
- Gymnasium and Fitness Centre.
- River Development.
- Restoration of Water Mill.
- Village Facilities: water system, footpaths, lighting, re-alignment of road junctions, speed limit signs.

3. Building Our Future.

- Cultural, Training and Educational Centre. Community Library and Resource Centre for Second Chance Education.
- Youth Club.

The project was initiated in 1995, when the association arranged for a FÁS community employment scheme⁸ to start in Drumkeen, employing fifteen workers. Over the course of a number of months, five hundred tonnes of earth were moved from an area of waste ground located between the community hall and the parochial house at the top of the village, which was flattened and seeded to create a garden. A new stone wall was built around it, and the borders were planted with shrubs and trees, the latter being chosen carefully as examples of the species that were commonly found in Donegal at the time of the famine. The centrepiece of the garden is a large “famine pot”, used for serving soup to the starving, and discovered buried in the mud flats of the Swilly estuary by a local farmer. The project eventually came to fruition in 1997, when an event was organised to commemorate the official opening of the garden, and the 150th anniversary of the end of the famine in 1847.

The following extracts from my field-notes describe three particular meetings held by the development association in the community hall during the first part of the year, to organise the opening, and an account of the event itself.

III.1.1 Drumkeen Development Association Meeting, 9th. June 1997.

The meeting was attended by eighteen people, including myself. Seven women sat together to the right of me, most of whom were in their twenties and early thirties, and were referred to as “the girls” by the men. Fr. Curran sat on my left, and to the left of him were six older men, mostly in their forties and fifties. The three committee members [Anne, the secretary, a married woman in her forties, who took the minutes, Donal, the chairman and Sean, the treasurer, both older men in their late fifties] sat at the front, behind a rickety wooden table. The meeting was generally informal, with no written agenda; most of those present smoked throughout, the proceedings being interspersed with the handing round of cigarettes, and there was a general air of bonhomie and laughter.

⁸ There is a very strong relationship between FÁS and voluntary groups in Donegal, and many of the groups considered in this study have been involved in managing community employment schemes. This programme allows people who have been unemployed for more than six months to gain work experience, for which they receive an allowance which is slightly more than state unemployment benefit. FÁS pays a “training allowance” to an organisation for each employee they take on, and also provides funds to buy materials, such as tools for practical work. There are very few restrictions on the type of organisations which can become involved in FÁS schemes, and often they are not “organisations” at all. For example, the priest of one of the villages where I worked set up his own scheme and employed a young unemployed man to cut the lawn of his house and to carry out cleaning jobs around the church.

The first item to be discussed concerned the festivities surrounding the opening of the famine garden on July 21st. Brochures had been printed advertising the event, which were distributed to the assembled audience. Fr. Curran, (who was referred to variously throughout the meeting as “Father” by the women present, “Father Curran” by the older men, and “Father. Tom” by the committee members) expressed concern that he had not been given a chance to proof-read the brochure first, as he had immediately noticed a number of spelling mistakes, to the embarrassment of those responsible for its production. The meeting then went on to discuss the possibility of persuading some “celebrities” to attend. Sean reported on his, ultimately fruitless, efforts to contact Daniel O'Donnell [an internationally-famous vocalist, who lives in the west of the county]; someone else mentioned Packie Bonner [the goalkeeper for the Irish football team, also a native of Donegal], but it was generally agreed that, by July, he would be back in Glasgow or touring with his club (Celtic) abroad. Anne described her attempts to “get some money off the councillors”. Seven had been contacted by letter, but only two replies had been received, in which the councillors apologised for the fact that they had already allocated their total development fund allowances for the year. The letters were read out, accompanied by general murmurings of “that’s typical” from a number of people around the room.

Donal, the chairman, then distributed several bundles of raffle tickets, to be sold at £10 each for a prize draw on the day, with each person being allocated a specific area in which to sell them. The geography of the parish was described in terms of the names of householders, e.g. “Emma, you go down as far as Bridie’s, and then Roisin can take in the hill up to Michael’s”. My offer to sell some tickets in my home village was politely turned down; it seems that if any are sold outside the parish, then the development association will become liable for a special gaming licence, which must be purchased from the Garda.

Fr. Curran reminded everyone of the bunting that would be needed for the festivities, and suggested that the women of the village meet one night during the following week to make it. This comment prompted a long and animated discussion between the female participants, who had been generally quiet up to this point, concerning which particular night they should choose, where to obtain the material and cord, and the type of bunting that should

be made.

Towards the end of the meeting, someone remarked on the recent decision of the County Council to delay the installation of the new water main until September. This was felt to be “outrageous” and “just not good enough”, as the development association had been told that the work would be completed by July. As Donal stated, indignantly, “St. Johnston and Convoy [adjacent villages] have got theirs already”. The meeting discussed the possibility of writing back to the engineer who had sent the letter informing them of the decision, but Fr. Curran pointed out that he was “just a lapdog”, and that they would be better off writing to J.J. Reid [local Fine Gael councillor] to see what he could do. The meeting agreed to meet again at the same time the following week.

III.1.2. DDA Meeting, 16th. June 1997.

Twenty people were present, and the room was again divided by gender. Three married couples arrived together, but separated upon taking their seats. The committee members sat at the front as before, and Donal began the meeting by apologising on behalf of Fr. Curran, who was unable to attend.

The initial item on the agenda was the tickets for the opening event. 260 had been distributed, from a total of 400 printed. There was a long discussion over the issue of who should be allowed to buy tickets: the Guarda licence was not mentioned, and I had the distinct impression that the real reason behind this was in order to make sure that a parish resident received the main prize. After much jocular argument, Donal, who had remained largely neutral throughout the debate, called the meeting to order and demanded that the group make a decision. It was finally agreed that tickets could be sold to sisters, brothers, aunts or uncles (“what about fifteenth cousins?”, somebody interjected) who now live outside the parish, but who were born within it. Anne reported that sixty-two letters and brochures had gone out to emigrees in Dublin, Cork, America and London [mentioned in that order], and that she was hopeful that substantial donations would be generated from this source.

Certain local “dignitaries” had been invited to the official opening event, including a number of members of Donegal County Council. There was a short debate about who else to invite, with the meeting eventually deciding that the development officers of the International Fund for Ireland and the Peace and Reconciliation Programme, along with the CEO of the Donegal Local Development Company, should also receive invitations, as their respective organisations had given money to the development association in the past. A suggestion was made that the person responsible for the FÁS scheme that helped build the garden be included, but Donal resolutely blocked this proposal, saying that the person in question had been responsible for the “disruption” of a number of FÁS schemes in St. Johnston and Raphoe. “He’s nothing but trouble. Anyone can come apart from him, I’m not having him here”. Sean, the treasurer, then suggested that all the former clergy of the parish be invited; this met with general approval, but reservations were expressed about whether they could all be traced in time. Someone opined that “they probably won’t come anyway- they’re only getting soup, not brandy”, to general amusement.⁹ There was a long debate about whether to invite any Quaker nuns, prompted by a remark from James that they had been the principal religious order responsible for helping people during the famine. No-one knew whether there were any Quakers currently residing in Donegal, so Marie was delegated with the task of contacting a group living in Derry that she was aware of.

The issue of whether to allow a take-away food van to set up at the event or not prompted a heated debate, but Donal eventually decided in the affirmative. “We’ll expect a substantial donation, but we’ll have to have one- you young ‘uns will be starving otherwise”, he said, pointing at the “girls” (one of whom was at least forty). Someone suggested that a low-loader would be required to bring the dignitaries up from the main road to the garden, to save them from walking up the hill, and the women present were instructed to buy some “nice materials” with which to adorn the lorry prior to the event. Anne reported that the owner of the shop had made a donation (the amount was not disclosed), and would allow the group to buy the ingredients needed for the soup and sandwiches which would be served on the night “at cost price”. There was much ironic praise from the audience, and I got the distinct impression that the lady in question was not very popular among

⁹ It is notable that a comment such as this would never have been made had the local priest been present. Indeed, the meeting as a whole was conducted in a more informal manner than on the previous occasion, which was almost certainly due to the absence of Fr. Curran.

the residents of the village.¹⁰ Finally, Donal stressed the need for everyone to tell their neighbours and friends to tidy up their gardens, and it was decided that a group of children would be delegated to clear the local area of litter. I was instructed to contact someone who lived near my home to ask them to bring a step-dancing troupe. It was agreed that a short meeting would be held in the week prior to the event to finalise arrangements, and organise the distribution of responsibilities.

III.1.3. DDA Meeting, 14th. July 1997.

Donal began by allocating everyone present to a “team”, each of which would have specific responsibilities on the night. He insisted that each team should have a leader, to whom everyone should defer. The women would be involved in making tea and preparing sandwiches behind the scenes, while the men would be responsible for controlling the traffic and taking tickets at the gate. There was long discussion over who to employ as the “master of ceremonies” (interestingly, there was no question, from the outset, of the role being taken by a woman). A number of people suggested Fr. Curran, but he politely declined. Eventually it was decided that someone who lived in the next village but one would be ideal, as he had had experience in opening various festivals around the county.

Over £2,000 had been raised through ticket sales so far. There was a short debate concerning the question of what to do about people who attended the event without tickets, but who did not wish to make donations either. Sean, the treasurer, stated resolutely that they should not be allowed in, but others at the meeting insisted that there could be no refusals, as the tickets were for the raffle, not admission.

The meeting ended on a slightly sour note, as Donal reported that some members of the parish had expressed concern that the money of the development association is not being utilised in the right way. He instructed everyone present to “take nothing” from these people, and “to stand up against them”. An accountant comes in to check the books every two months, and, anyway, the group has been operating on a shoestring (“ha’pennies”) for most of its existence.

¹⁰ It is worth noting that the person in question is a Protestant, in common with most small shopkeepers in Donegal (cf. Sacks 1976: 42).

O.K., so we got £3000 from the Peace Programme, but most of that went on the new roof for the community centre, and the materials grant for the garden [from FÁS] all went on the gates and stones. This event is all being paid for from what we have raised.

There was an air of general disgust that anyone could possibly harbour reservations about the association's activities, and a number of names were mentioned around the room. Someone turned to me as I was leaving, and said conspiratorially, "It's the Protestants that are saying these things, you know. It's all Parochial politics: it's a lot different from towns out here".

III.1.4. The Opening of the Famine Garden, 21st. July 1997.

I arrived late in the afternoon, as I had been delegated to act as one of the stewards for the event, and over the course of the next two hours, watched from my position on the gate as Drumkeen was transformed from a sleepy village into a bustling metropolis, as people arrived in cars, taxis and even coaches from many areas of eastern Donegal.

After considerable delay, caused by the late arrival of one of the councillors, the official opening ceremony got underway. A marching band of local children led a procession up the hill, which was followed by the invited guests. A flat-bed trailer of a lorry had been parked in front of the community centre, a microphone and lectern being erected upon it to form an impromptu stage, and the guests took their seats upon it. The dignitaries were J.J. Reid, Jim Devenny, Danny Harkin [local councillors], Thomas Gildea [newly-elected independent T.D. for Donegal South West], Michael Gilvarry [chief executive officer of the Donegal Local Development Company], Bishop Boyce [Catholic Bishop of Letterkenny], Archdeacon Harte [representing Bishop McHaffery, Church of Ireland Bishop of Derry and Raphoe], Fr. Curran, Anne, Sean and Donal, along with a Quaker nun and three former clergy of the parish. Fr. Curran, the Bishop, the Archdeacon and Thomas Gildea each gave a short speech, thanking the members of the committee and all the dignitaries for attending the event, stressing the hard work the community had put into the garden, and outlining the relevance of the famine for Ireland today. A personal letter sent from Mary Robinson to the development association was read out by Bishop Boyce. Michael Gilvarry made the final speech,

during which he outlined how the Donegal Local Development Company had helped the development association over the course of the last two years.

When they initially approached us, we told them that the DLDC couldn't help them directly, but we hassled Paul Skinnader and managed to get some money from the Peace Programme, and also hassled the Task Force in the County Council, who administer part of the Peace money, and got some money out of them as well.

He concluded by announcing that:

...the board of directors of the DLDC have agreed to grant-aid the river improvement scheme, which is the next project the development association is going to be involved in. I can't actually say how much money is involved, but I can give you an indication when I say that the community's contribution in terms of voluntary labour and administration is £35,000, which will give you some idea of the amount of money which the DLDC- your LEADER group- is putting into this project.

Talking to members of the committee at the VIP tea afterwards, I was told that the association had known about the grant already, but had been instructed not to mention it to anyone as it had not been officially approved by the DLDC board. In Sean's words, "This is the way it always happens. He'll have been waiting for this event to announce it, to increase their image, I suppose". Although the speech was greeted with enthusiastic applause from the assembled audience, it is worth noting that none of the three councillors on the platform joined in. It was also clear, from talking to local people during the course of the evening, that very few of those present had ever heard of the LEADER programme, or knew who the speaker was.

Everyone then proceeded to the garden itself for a service of blessing, which was followed by the serving of soup, made to a particular recipe used during the famine, from the famine pot by the women of the parish, all of whom were dressed in nineteenth-century costume ("famine clothes"). Following the service, the dignitaries were then escorted to the local school, where a

lavish tea was served in one of the classrooms. The evenings proceeding's began with a lecture on the famine, and the stage was then cleared for dancing and music, various bands and dance troupes taking turns to entertain the audience. The festivities ended at about 1 am, when everyone stood up, put the hands behind their backs and faced the stage for the traditional rendition of the national anthem.

It was generally agreed among the organisers that the event had been an overwhelming success, and, after the tables and chairs were put back in the community hall, and the last car had left the car park, Drumkeen returned to normality once more.

IV. Saint Johnston.

St. Johnston is a small village on the River Foyle in the far east of the county, the river separating Donegal from county Tyrone, in the North. With a population of about 850, it is a larger settlement than Drumkeen, but like its neighbour, has few services or local amenities. There are three pubs, a newsagent and post office, two general stores, a national school, two churches, a car scrap yard and a small factory. Employment opportunities in the area are few, and the unemployment rate is currently very high; of those that are employed, most work in a meat-processing factory in Carrigans, about three miles to the north, and the Fruit of the Loom plant in Buncrana, with a small number travelling each day to work in factories or shops in Letterkenny or Derry.

Unlike Drumkeen, however, there are two development groups operating in the village. The St. Johnston Development Association was created in 1992, and is primarily involved in economic development. It is an interdenominational organisation, led jointly by the Presbyterian minister in the village, the Rev. Peter Fleming, and the local Catholic priest, Mns. Dan Carr. The other, the St. Johnston Community Development Group, was formed more recently, and is administered by a committee of local women. Whilst the two organisations have pursued a number of notable initiatives during recent years, the experience of both encapsulates some of the problems which can beset voluntary-led development in Donegal.

Mns Carr arrived in St. Johnston in 1988, and, although a native of Donegal, was immediately struck with the extent of the village's impoverishment and the fatalistic outlook of its inhabitants. There were very high levels of unemployment and suicide, school attendance rates were low, five families were living in caravans, and the housing conditions in general were extremely poor. In common with many other members of the ecclesiastical establishment in the county, he blames what he terms the "dependency culture" on the Ulster Plantation, which served to instill a sense of pessimism and "negative moral values" on the part of the local populace. These have subsequently been transmitted across generations, and, in Mns. Carr's view, are the direct cause of a number of social problems which currently pervade the area. Local people in St. Johnston and the surrounding district traditionally worked on Plantation lands either as hired hands or tenant farmers, under the "Cottier"¹¹ system of peasant labouring, in which landowners were responsible for providing their employees with basic needs, including accommodation and foodstuffs. In the eyes of Mns. Carr, although the Plantation has long disappeared, its legacy has remained, and is manifested by a pathological mentality of subjugation to the patronage of the state, something which has been compounded by the lack of interest shown by the latter in developing the area. As an example, he cites the fact that St. Johnston is located on the border between two engineering districts, Buncrana and Letterkenny, "which means that the place has been almost entirely ignored by the County Council for decades, and yet the local people have done nothing to fight this outrageous neglect".¹²

Mns. Carr sees his primary role, and that of the association which he leads, in terms of an almost missionary-like quest to overturn the negativity of his congregation, and to persuade people to remain in the local area. His philosophy has been strongly influenced by the theories of the prominent Irish-based environmentalist and social campaigner Richard Douthwaite, and, in this respect, he argues that the key to the development of the village lies in the ability to create a system whereby wealth is retained within its

¹¹ Cottier is defined in the OED as "Cottager; Irish peasant holding ~ *tenure* (letting of land in small portions at rent fixed by competition)".

¹² This type of view is extremely common in Donegal. Settlements which are located on the borders between two engineering or electoral districts are, by virtue of their distance from the centres of such areas and their status of "falling between two stools", are often thought to have been neglected by the county council. Whether there is any truth in this assumption, it is impossible to say.

boundaries.¹³ Since his arrival, he has therefore been attempting to convince people of the benefits of investing their income in the local Credit Union, rather than in a bank, and saving towards the cost of building their own homes in the village, instead of renting in perpetuity from the council. It has, however, been an uphill struggle. In his words,

The level of self-advancement in St. Johnston is zero. People have a 'live now, pay later' mentality. People here don't want to invest in a house: they have this psychology which says that 'when I get some money, I'm going to spend it now'. But the people who work in the factory [in Carrigans], they are earning enough to do it, but they just go out and buy a fast car, or other ridiculous items which they don't need. The pub is always so full on a Friday and Saturday night, with young men taking on drink...and then they'll go out and probably crash their cars. They have no conception of self-responsibility. I've been trying to help some of my people manage their finances in a responsible manner, and not to spend their money on ridiculous foreign holidays or fast cars, and Rev. Fleming's been doing the same with his people....Those who go on to third-level education, and there are very few, almost always leave the area, which means that what we are left with here in St. Johnston is the weaklings, and we're fighting a constant battle with them.¹⁴

Mns. Carr also argues that the majority of his congregation have "no appreciation of the value of education". When he arrived in 1988, he became chairman of the board of management of the local school, St. Nathans, and was dismayed to discover that the school attendance at the start of the academic year was invariably far lower than it had been during the previous term. In investigating the reasons behind this, he found that many local

¹³ See, for example, Douthwaite (1996).

¹⁴ There is a remarkable similarity between the general thrust of this comment and a passage contained within Fr. McDyer's autobiography:

Rural communities are different from urban communities. In the urban setting there is usually the ebb and flow of a changing population and the consequent interaction of new ideas. Rural communities generally can expect no such replacements, and the exodus from them usually siphons off the more entrepreneurial and ambitious types. This process carried on for over a hundred years is bound to leave behind it a debilitated population where neglect has given way to despair, and despair to introversion, apathy to conservatism (1982: 50).

This view of emigration has a long legacy in Ireland. C.H. Oldham, for example wrote in 1914:

Thus there had been, in Ireland, a perpetual survival of the unfittest, a steady a debasement of the human currency... (Oldham 1914: 213-214. Quoted in Meenan 1970: 346).

children worked as potato pickers in the surrounding fields during September and October, and, for decades, the actual beginning of the autumn term had been dictated by the timing of the potato harvest. He describes the introduction of the mechanised potato extractor in the late 1980s as a “watershed in the life of the town”.

The opinions expressed by Mns Carr regarding the social situation in eastern Donegal, and its origins, differ significantly to those held by his colleague in Drumkeen, Fr. Curran. The villages are separated by a distance of thirteen miles, with only two other significant settlements lying between them, and yet their geographical location is, in Mns Carr’s view, a crucial explanatory factor for what he perceives as their differential levels of development. He argues that the residents of Drumkeen have, for many generations, displayed a far greater level of self-reliance and dynamism than those living in his own parish, something which he again views as a product of the Plantation’s legacy.

People were moved up into the highland area around the Laggan [where Drumkeen is situated], when the plantation was established on the fertile lands around here, you see, so people had to fend for themselves over there and never picked up the dependency mentality and negative values that we have in St. Johnston. The famine garden project is nothing new; there’s been a history of community action in Drumkeen. They built their football pitch prior to this- and you won’t find anything else like that anywhere else in the county- and in 1990, they built their church. At one time, no-one in the clergy wanted to be sent to Drumkeen, because there was a perception that the local people were taking over: ‘this is our parish, and we’re going to be the ones who improve it’.¹⁵

It may seem remarkable that events which took place in the early part of the seventeenth-century can possibly be cited as the principal reasons for the lack of development of a place like St. Johnston, along with the presence of a new football pitch in Drumkeen. What of other factors, such as the urban-rural divide, the collapse of the agricultural economy, the lack of infrastructure and the “Troubles” across the border, for example? In the opinion of Mns

¹⁵ Mns Carr had no doubt that this was a very negative development, as it served to remove the power from the local priest.

Carr, and it should be noted, many others like him, these are “givens”, independent variables which all people in Donegal are faced with. It is the actual process of development, and its practical components in terms of organising public meetings, writing letters, preparing applications, drawing down grants and managing budgets- in sum, the level of voluntarism- which is the crucial ingredient, and this is something viewed as being directly related to the “character” of the local population. Mns. Carr therefore posits an almost biological explanation of what he sees as both the moral irrectitude and the fatalistic outlook of the inhabitants of his own parish. He contends that local people have been partially responsible for the problems that they are currently faced with, and that they are active participants in the processes which have led to the neglect of the area. To a certain extent, his attitude has been influenced by his personal experience of the development process during the past six years, through his involvement in the St. Johnston Development Association.

The formation of the group was prompted by a telephone call made to Mns. Carr in early 1992 by Paddy Harte Jnr., the development officer of the International Fund for Ireland, whom Mns Carr had taught at St. Eunan’s College in Letterkenny in his previous job as a teacher. Paddy Harte enquired about the possibility of establishing an “ad hoc” committee to source funding from a new IFI initiative, the Border Towns and Villages Measure. Mns. Carr and the Church of Ireland minister in the parish, Rev. Fleming, decided to form an interdenominational organisation, and appointed five or six people from each of their congregations to sit on the committee, which the two church leaders chaired in turn. They arranged with FÁS for a facilitator to attend each meeting, which were held weekly for one-and-half years, during which the group attempted to formulate a viable business idea. According to Mns. Carr, the attitude of the community at large was somewhat negative, since many projects, especially those associated with knitwear and weaving, had failed in the past. Two people, native to the area, eventually came forward with a plan for a meat-processing factory to supply the packaging plant in Carrigans, as well as a company based in Derry, which the committee and the IFI agreed would be a feasible option. A public meeting was then held, in order to inform people of the project which had been decided upon, and to appoint a more formally-constituted board of management. Nineteen people were elected in total, representing each townland in the area, and

since this time, regular monthly meetings have been held. Although the clergymen still chair meetings, they stood down from the committee after the initial public meeting.

The IFI provided a grant of £30,000 for the purchase of the land, and also helped to fund the cost of building the factory, carried out by a local contractor, as well as the buying of the machinery and the facilities which were required. The remainder of the money was raised through a £60,000 bridging loan, repayable over ten years, taken out by the committee with a high-street bank and secured partly on the land that the association owns. The factory began operations in August 1996, and now employs seven people, with plans eventually to expand the workforce to sixteen. The company is charged £600 per month in rent (in 1997) by the development association, a comparatively low figure, which is used principally to pay off the money owed to the bank.

Whilst the venture has been a success, generating a steady flow of orders and creating employment, a number of problems have been encountered by the committee, which mirror the experiences of many other community groups in the county who have become involved in economic development initiatives, or indeed, any projects which require external finance. The major difficulty cited by the committee has been caused by the principle of retrospective funding, which is a fundamental tenet of all EU-funded operations. Rev. Fleming and Mns. Carr took responsibility for the paperwork associated with the project, and were careful to ensure that all receipts were retained and presented to the various development agencies in time for bills to be paid. However, they have found that there is often a lengthy delay before money is reimbursed by the funding bodies after invoices have been submitted to them. Forbairt and the IFI claim that, if the receipts are presented on a Monday morning, the money will be made available by Friday evening. However, according to the members of the development association, this is not the case: the IFI take, on average, three months to pay, (two months in the case of Forbairt), something which has led to various difficulties with contractors. As one of the committee members pointed out,

They need paying on time and, when the factory was being built, because we had not paid the building contractor all of his money,

he went off to Roscommon to finish a job down there and kept us on hold for a while. Luckily most were patient with us, but if they hadn't been, I don't know what we would have done.

Another problem caused by late payment concerns the issue of overdrafts: during the past three years, the group was forced to borrow from its bank on a number of occasions, for which they were charged interest and bank fees. As no grant-aiding body will incorporate these unforeseen costs into the provisions they make for funding, the committee was ultimately responsible for covering these liabilities. Moreover, the development association had to lodge the deeds to the lands with the bank, as security on the loans they had taken out with them, a process which involved altering the names on the legal papers and cost the association £680 in solicitor's fees. Mns Carr has suggested to Paddy Harte, only half-jokingly, that the IFI would be "better off cutting out the middle man", and paying the grant directly to the bank, given the amount of money that the association has had to pay in charges.

In common with most other development groups in Donegal, the St. Johnston association has applied to the County Council's development fund¹⁶ in order to supplement its income. The village is in the enviable position of falling between the two electoral districts of Letterkenny and Buncrana, which means that they have a total of thirteen members upon which to draw. Representations made to the councillors led to a promise of £12,000 in early 1997; at the time of writing, however, the group has yet to receive the money. They have been told by two local councillors that the County Manager has insisted that the local authority has a direct input into the project. As such a large proportion of the development fund is at stake, he has apparently blocked the councillors from distributing the money until the association can give them an assurance that council members will, in future, be included in the management of the project. The committee is against this, as it was decided from the beginning that councillors would not be included on the board. But given that the promised grant will go a long way towards paying off the bridging loan, most people are of the opinion that this will have to happen eventually.

¹⁶ See chapter seven, section V.3.1.

The number of people on the committee has dropped sharply over the past three years, from the original nineteen to a current membership of four. Mns. Carr contends that there are various different reasons for this. Firstly, several people have moved out of the area, and have not been replaced on the committee. Secondly, some members were coerced into joining at the initial public meeting:

They were nominated and seconded by their friends, and they didn't have any choice. But their hearts weren't really in it. They were not prepared to go in with their sleeves rolled up.

Thirdly, a certain degree of animosity was generated when the group realised that four members of the committee would have to sign the forms for the bridging loan. Eventually it was agreed whom the four should be, but two of them were very reluctant to accept this onerous responsibility, given that the bank made it very clear that, should the project fail, the signatories would become liable for the repayments on the debt. Finally, the members came to feel that the effort that they were putting in to the committee was not being recognised by local people, and that the community as a whole was not particularly supportive of the project.

People have put so much time and effort and their own money into this project, and yet really get nothing in return. They haven't received any thanks or respect from the people for the hard work which they have done. The only time that the local community took any interest in the factory was when the building of it was put on hold when the contractor went off to Roscommon. There is a cynical outlook which people have; they almost presume projects will fail even before they have started.

In Mns. Carr's opinion, the principle that development should be led entirely by local volunteers, which is incorporated into most EU-funded programmes operating in Donegal, is manifestly unrealistic, and unsustainable in the long-term. He argues that agencies should make a fund available from which local people can claim expenses, for travelling, telephone and postage costs, and for voluntary work done in lieu.¹⁷

¹⁷ Some agencies, including those funded under the LEADER II programme, do allow voluntary work to be included as matching collateral for grant aid.

Agencies like Forbairt and the IDA, with all their expertise, research people, working on bringing industry into this area full-time have not been able to do it in the past. So why should they expect ordinary local people, who don't have a clue about all the ins and outs of drawing down money, banks and things, to do it? The EU programmes, everything has to be coming from the bottom-up. Well, I suppose there's some wisdom in that, so you don't have faceless civil servants running things. But it also means that the onus for development is put on local people acting as volunteers, which is often not very realistic when they aren't given any help...The agencies presume that there is a 'community spirit' already in place before they come in, whereas this is not often the case. In reality, it simply comes down to a small band of committed people working very hard for very little reward. No-one on this committee would ever get involved in a project again. Everybody is really shattered, and just wants to get on with other things now. The source of voluntary labour in St. Johnston has now dried up.

Despite Mns. Carr's rather pessimistic views, there is another development group in the village which appears to have adopted the mantle of voluntary action vacated by the Development Association, and to which the focus of this discussion will now turn.

IV.2. The St. Johnston Community Group.

I first met Pat and Margaret, two members of the St. Johnston Community Group, on a warm, early summer's night in 1997, at the small school in the village. The meeting had been pre-arranged, and they were already waiting outside for me when I arrived. Both were very well-dressed in what, I assumed, was not their usual evening attire, and, as we walked together over to the school buildings, I realised that the two women were feeling somewhat apprehensive about the interview; I made a mental note to leave my tape-recorder in my jacket pocket. The school was busy with children, as the junior marching band was practising in the small playground attached to the school. A caretaker met us at the door, and we were escorted into one of the three small classrooms, where, over the following two and a half hours, the women impressed upon me the problems of the village and their experience

of running the community group. As Margaret explained to me,

We want people like you to know about how cut off we are in a place like this, because, you know, maybe you'll be able to do something about it in a few years.¹⁸

"This area is isolated in every way" was how Pat described St. Johnston early in the interview. "People get caught in this endless spiral here", indicating this with a circular movement of her hand.

What happens is, they leave national school and go onto the secondary school for maybe two or three months, and then leave. They would maybe drift around for a few years and then end up in the factory at 15 or 16. I don't know what we'd do if Fruit of the Loom went, we'd all have to pack our bags and follow them.

They spoke at length about the problems facing the residents of the village, which include a total lack of public transport, a very high school drop-out rate, a high rate of suicide (which was apparently one of the highest in Europe until very recently), a lack of amenities, and no doctor's surgery or other health care facilities. "You have to nearly go to Raphoe for the nearest doctor, and that's a long way if you don't have a car, you know....and they never want to come out and see you."

In Margaret and Pat's view, the border region is the most deprived area in Donegal, and has been neglected at the expense of other areas in the county.

In the west, they only have to ask for anything and everybody jumps. They've got Údarás and all the grants for them being a Gaeltacht area, but around here, we've never had anything. Industries have been sent away from this area to Gweedore- look at all the jobs they have there- but the only employer in this area, you know around St. Johnston and Carrigans, is the meat-packing factory [in Carrigans]. /.../There is a social and educational need in St. Johnston, for somewhere for people to go and for them to get together. St. Johnston is socially deprived, and so we really

¹⁸ It is notable that "cut off" in this context implies far more than geographical isolation. It also conveys the neglect of the area by the local authority and the State: see chapter two.

The St. Johnston Community Group was created in April 1996 by a number of women who were involved in running the playgroup in the village. The initial impetus stemmed largely from a lack of public amenities in the area: for over a year, the playgroup had had no suitable place in which to base its activities, as the building they were previously using required extensive renovation in order to comply with new building regulations. With the help of a local community worker employed by the North Western Health Board, the women developed a plan to establish a resource centre, which would provide a social focus for the residents of the area and be of use to all sections of the community. Following a public meeting, a committee of eight people was elected representing the three principal religious denominations (Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian) in St. Johnston, something that was felt to be one of the key elements in the future success of the group. In Pat's words:

We would see that as very important, because it is an issue for people here. I mean, we wouldn't be at each others' throats or anything like that, but it's just that people move in different circles and know different people in the village, and if you're seen not to be including everyone, then things are not likely to go very far.

The committee members visited two other development groups in the area (located in Lifford and Raphoe) to collect information and exchange ideas, and were encouraged by the success of these projects, both of which were initiated by community groups similar to their own. A site was bought in late 1996 with the help of the North Western Health Board and, at the time of writing, the committee is hopeful that the building will be completed by the end of 1999.

It is envisaged that the centre will be used for a variety of purposes. One of its primary functions will be as an elderly drop-in facility, where the pensioners

¹⁹ These remarks support Cawley's view that

It is now widely recognised that many of the inhabitants of rural areas in the Republic of Ireland are falling seriously behind national norms in terms of the levels of basic service provision they experience (1986: 57).

Also significant are Gillmore's findings from a survey conducted in thirteen villages in Ireland. He found that in ten of the cases, industry and employment represented the leading requirement cited by people to improve their development status (1986: 29-30).

of the village will be able to obtain low-cost meals, be provided with entertainment and generally have somewhere to go to socialise, as currently there is nowhere for them to meet apart from in local pubs. The building will also incorporate an advice service for the unemployed, with access to information concerning employment opportunities in the area, and free use of a telephone and fax machine. A children's play-area attached to the centre will cater for the needs of the playgroup, the cubs and scouts and the three marching bands based in the village. The Health Board has also agreed to locate a small health-care centre in the building, a decision regarded by the members of the committee as entirely due to the influence of the community worker. After arranging a meeting between the group and the PRP development officer, she helped them to fill in an application for an initial seeding grant, which was approved. Some of this was used to conduct a community audit, which involved surveying fifty people in the village to canvas their views concerning the proposed resource centre. Five social categories- the elderly, the unemployed, children, youth and single mothers, corresponding to the potentially "socially excluded" groups as defined by the PRP- were identified, and ten people were interviewed from each group. The grant also covered the cost of preparing the architectural plans for the centre.

We were a bit too ambitious, because we applied for £3,000 in the first place, but we weren't able to spend it all in the length of time that we had, and had to send a lot of it back.

In May 1997, the group was allocated a further grant of £85,000 by the Peace and Reconciliation Programme, funded at the maximum 100% rate (i.e. the group has not had to put in any matching funding). This will be used for various measures, including management training for the committee members, the employment of a community development worker and a youth leader, and organising a summer playscheme for the children of the village.²⁰ As Margaret pointed out,

We used to have playschemes about 6 or 7 years ago, but they died out, because there was no money and, I don't know, people were not really interested. There was a feeling of despair in St.

²⁰ The playscheme was held over two weeks in July 1997, and was attended by about 50 children in the area.

The approval of this grant was felt to be a "real achievement" by the committee members, tangible evidence that they were finally "getting somewhere". They will shortly be forming a limited company, registered with Company House in Dublin, with the eight members of the committee becoming the board of directors. They will then have to draw up a written constitution, maintain proper accounting procedures and record the minutes of all the meetings they hold.

I sometimes think we've gone too far with this; none of us had any idea about these things before- we're certainly learning fast [laughs].

The women themselves have had little experience of any type of business operation, (with the exception of Pat, who worked as a secretary in Derry for a short time), something which has made the process all the more daunting. "We had to jump through hoops to get this money, you know, it was like pushing a stone up a hill half the time". "Soul destroying" was the way Margaret summed up the experience.

They don't tell you about all the work and time you have to put into this before you start: writing reports on where you spent all the money, what happened at the events, who came, they want so much detail. I mean, neither of us have a job, but this is like doing a full-time job anyway.

Perhaps surprisingly, given that these difficulties have been experienced before by Mns Carr, the group has very little contact with the other development group in St. Johnston, and has no intention of developing a working relationship with them, or pooling activities. Pat and Margaret perceive the Development Association as an entirely church-led organisation, and characterise their own group, in comparison, as one which is more representative of the residents of the area and more receptive to local concerns.

They're into economic development, whereas we wouldn't be into any kind of profit-making venture or anything like that. That group

is run by the clergymen, whereas our group involves the local people of the area.

After the interview was completed, I was invited by Margaret back to her house, for tea. Her family live in a small terraced house on the main street in St. Johnston, adjacent to one of the local pubs. The house has no garden, and fronts directly onto the pavement. As we talked over cups of tea, several sandwiches and slices of home-made cake ("tea" in Donegal invariably means far more than simply a hot drink), she elaborated on the problems she currently faces in her own life, personalising the more general comments made in the school. Margaret herself is in her early forties, has thirteen children, and by her own admission "has been in that spiral too". She was married at a very young age, "been nowhere" and has never had a job, apart from looking after her family. Her eldest child is currently working as a chef in Jersey, the second eldest is at the RTC in Letterkenny studying business, another has just received his leaving certificate, and the other ten are all still at school and living at home, where they share three bedrooms. There is no school bus service to transport children to secondary schools in Letterkenny, and Margaret is reliant upon the goodwill of a friend, who gives lifts to four of Margaret's own children each day.

The lack of transport is the main problem we have here, that's why many of the children drop out of school, because they have to away over to Letterkenny, and it costs their parents a lot of money in fares. There would be no way I could afford a car, not with the insurance and all.

In common with her colleagues in the development group, her perception of development is strongly influenced by her role as a mother, and the needs of the playgroup remains the primary motivation underlying her participation in the community association, as well as being one of the principal foci for the proposed resource centre. This is perhaps a significant factor in the success of the association, and illustrates an important point about community development activity as a whole; for however altruistic the aims of a community group are in the abstract, their continued existence often depends upon on the degree to which those involved receive some tangible benefit when the fruits of their labours are finally realised.

V. Convoy.

Convoy is a town of almost 2000 people situated to the east of St. Johnston, approximately half-way between Raphoe and Drumkeen. It is similar in size to the former settlement, with the usual range of services and amenities (which include three churches, two schools, a post office, three shops, two pubs and a petrol station) and, as a small street village, it is largely typical of those that surround it. Convoy does, however, have one unique feature which serves to distinguish it from other settlements in the area, since it represents one of the historical centres of the county's woollen industry. The built environment is dominated by the former workshops of the Convoy Woollen Mills, housed in a large Victorian edifice located a short distance from the main street, which provides a stark and constant reminder of a once thriving industry. Although the mills finally ceased operations in 1987, bringing to an end almost a century of continuous woollen processing, their legacy has had a marked influence upon the nature of local development in the village, and has served to shape the trajectory of community endeavour in the ten years which have elapsed since the factory's closure.

As in the case of Drumkeen and St. Johnston, community development in Convoy is motivated by, and experienced through, the prism of a particular interpretation of historical forces, which, as well as affording an explanatory framework for contemporary social structures, forms an important ideological basis for the mobilisation of voluntary action. In Convoy, however, it is not so much the impact of the Ulster Plantation (although this is still significant), as Donegal's recent industrial past which is crucial to the construction and negotiation of both notions of place ("why we are here") and conceptions of identity ("who we are"), as viewed through the eyes of the inhabitants of the area, and manifested in development activity. The following case-study concerns two development initiatives in Convoy, which have both had a marked impact upon the "lived experience" of residents of the area.

V.1. The Convoy Enterprise Centre.

Convoy lies on the banks of the fast-flowing Deele river, and is thus an ideal location for milling. The development of the woollen industry in the area can be positively traced back to at least the early decades of the nineteenth-

century, and was probably initiated much earlier. The first Ordnance Survey map of Ireland, published in 1835, records the presence of a “tuck mill” on the northern edge of the river at Convoy²¹, and a parish survey conducted at around the same time makes reference to a corn and flax mill in the same locality. Although it is unlikely that this fledgling industry was anything more than a cottage-based operation at this time, it probably had a significant effect in insulating the local population from the rigours of the famine to come. Gribbon (1969) notes that by 1883, the first formally-constituted operation was established in the village with the formation of the Convoy Woollen Company by two local men, which initially acted as an agency for the sale of woollen goods produced on surrounding farmsteads. Their success in this venture eventually led to the building of the first factory, which commenced production in 1891 and, according to Gribbon, housed 2500 spindles and 30 looms, driven by a water turbine and two water wheels. A steam engine was installed in 1900, and a water turbine in 1932, both of which were eventually succeeded by power from the electricity board following the first rural electrification programme in the 1940s (*ibid.*: 65-6). A magnificent, sixteen-roomed art-deco house was built on a site adjacent to the factory by the company’s owner in the early 1930s, for the use of himself and his family, an ostentatious indicator of the profitability of the business. Between five and six hundred people were employed in the woollen mills during their zenith in the 1940s, leading to a significant expansion of the local population. However, the recession of the 1950s, combined with the loss of a number of significant markets as competition from foreign producers intensified precipitated a sharp decline in production, which eventually resulted in the closure of the factory in 1987 with the loss of 120 jobs.

Upon liquidation, the company’s assets were bought by a shadowy Englishman named Mr. Holmes (referred to disdainfully by local people as “Holmes”), who sold the machinery at a large profit and offered the buildings for sale for £30,000. As no prospective buyers emerged, a number of individuals in the local area, including many former employees of the mills, decided to form a group with the aim of raising the necessary finance to buy the premises. The group was formally constituted as Convoy Enterprise Development Limited, and a public meeting was held in the summer of 1988 in order to elect a committee representing each townland in the district. Through a

²¹ Ordnance Survey Six Inch Maps, Sheet 21: Donegal. Dublin: Ordnance Survey, 1835.

voluntary subscription scheme, with local people contributing an average of £100 per household, a total sum of £21,800 was raised in less than two years, and, with the help of a grant from the International Fund for Ireland, the group was able to purchase the building in early 1990. A FÁS community employment scheme along with other grants- most notably from Forbairt, the Peace and Reconciliation Programme and the County Enterprise Board- facilitated its conversion. Thus the Convoy Enterprise Centre was born.

The Mission Statement of the centre, displayed prominently in the entrance hall, is as follows:

The Convoy Enterprise Centre is a local community initiative conceived with the aim of providing quality business units, together with associated services, in the former Convoy Woollen Mill premises. By doing so, creating an environment for the establishment of business enterprises and sustainable local employment opportunities, thus protecting and fostering the community's future development and past heritage.

The centre now employs eighty people in fourteen separate businesses, which occupy all the available space in the building (a further 10,000 square feet has yet to be converted). There have been few difficulties in attracting customers into the premises, as the Centre charges the lowest industrial rents in the county (starting at £1 per square foot per annum), the money being used towards the ongoing costs of conversion and maintenance. In the words of the secretary of the group, "it's not about profit- its about the community, and getting the rest of the project finished". Although the present workforce includes relatively few people who were formerly employed by the mills, all except two of the companies²² have been established by local people, their activities (which include knitwear manufacturing, furniture upholstery and joinery) largely reflecting the previous function of the building. Furthermore, the vast majority of the employees live in the immediate vicinity.

The Centre is also the base for the W.E.A.V.E. Group, a local development association which occupies a series of offices on the ground floor and a small workshop on an upper storey, and to which our attention now turns.

²² The first company to move into the premises was Edel MacBride knitwear, a small operation which relocated from premises in Derry. This is one of the firms which is classified as an "outsider", despite the fact that Edel herself hails from Convoy and her father sits on the committee of the Enterprise Centre. The other non-local company is based in Stranolar, about seven miles away, and operates a warehousing operation at the centre.

The W.E.A.V.E. group was established in 1995 by a number of married women from Convoy, some of whom had been employed in the woollen mills prior to their closure. They all had worked together on a FÁS community employment scheme located in the Enterprise Centre during 1994, and when the scheme had come to an end early in the following year, they resolved actively to seek external funding in order to initiate their own project. A committee was elected comprising solely women from the village, the group deciding not to “dilute their resolve” by including outsiders on the board of management. Through a friend of one of the members, who was working as a consultant to the LEADER groups in the county at the time, the group heard about a seminar on European Union development programmes being held in County Sligo, which was duly attended by two of the women. Through this meeting, they learned of the EMPLOYMENT community initiative, and decided to apply for grant-aid to the NOW (“New Opportunities for Women”) strand of the programme under the second round of funding (1994-9), for which project proposals were then being invited.

Two NOW projects had been located in Donegal under the pilot scheme, which ran from 1991 to 1994, and other EMPLOYMENT initiatives were already established in Letterkenny²³ and Glencolumbkille. However, the women found that the individuals involved in these initiatives were extremely reluctant to discuss their projects with them, and they were therefore unable to obtain any advice on how to complete the application. Although their consultant friend gave them some help with what they describe as the “Eurospeak” aspects of the form, she herself had had little previous experience of applying for EU funding, and they submitted the proposal with few expectations of success. The fact that the project was approved therefore came as a great surprise to the group, especially when, following the announcement, a number of other organisations who had been turned down contacted them to ask how they had prepared their application and who they had employed as consultants on it. The Convoy project is the only NOW initiative operating in the north-west of Ireland (Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim), and a daily refrain in their office is “thank God for Europe”.

²³ The two organisations involved in this initiative were St. Fiachra’s Training Centre and the National Rehabilitation Board. See chapter four, section III.

W.E.A.V.E. is an acronym for “Women in Employment And Vocational Education”, a designation which reflects the overall ethos of the group. The principal motivating factor behind its formation, and one shared by all of those who were involved, was to provide training and employment opportunities for local women by establishing a course in weaving skills based in the Enterprise Centre. Shortly after the group received notice of the grant from the NOW programme, eight hand looms were acquired, and the Scottish College of Weaving²⁴, based in Gallowshiels, agreed to accredit the course externally and to supply teaching materials and a tutor to run a summer school. The choice of hand-operated, as opposed to automated looms, was made deliberately: those involved in the project view themselves as reviving the tradition of weaving in Convoy, and therefore purchased the machinery on the basis of its similarity to that which was used in the woollen mills during their heyday. A proportion of the grant was used to fund a two-week training course in rural development practice for the members of the board, held at University College Dublin, which they all found to be very useful and enjoyable. To begin with, the group employed a young woman as a manager for the project, but quickly came to realise that this had been a mistake, as they began to feel like “intruders in their own office”. They lost track of the day-to-day running of the project, and found that their new employee was in contact more regularly with people whom she knew in Dublin rather than the residents of the village. In the words of one of the members, “because she was an outsider, she had little idea of the needs and visions of the women of this area, and we had to let her go”. Two of the women then agreed to act as part-time administrators, which necessitated their resignation from the board. A series of meetings with educational officers at FÁS in Letterkenny led to the recognition of the programme as an official training initiative, which allowed the ten local women who were recruited onto the course in the first instance (six of whom were originally members of the W.E.A.V.E. group) to claim a weekly allowance of £85, and also enabled the employment of a professional weaver as the FÁS facilitator. In 1996, a suite of computers was purchased, and the group initiated a course teaching basic computing skills to the ten trainees, as well as a number of other local people from the village. In addition, the county’s Vocational Educational Committee provided tutors for courses in marketing, business and I.T. skills, which were also taught, as night classes, in the Enterprise Centre. (Basing

²⁴ Now part of the University of Edinburgh.

everything in the village was felt to be essential to the organisers, as few of those involved have access to transport).

The ten trainees have relatively similar social and educational backgrounds. All but two are married and have children of school age or older, and many have been unemployed for a considerable time. Few have qualifications beyond the level of the Junior Leaving Certificate. In the words of one of the trainees, who worked at the woollen mills for five years before their closure:

I was a carpet weaver, in Killybegs, but I lost my job, my second teenager had left home, and I felt a bit redundant, so I was very glad to hear about this course.

As most of their husbands work during the day, the course fulfils an important social, as well as educational, function for the women, particularly as there are no public meeting places in Convoy outside the two small pubs. The actual process of weaving itself, along with the open-plan arrangement of the working space, serves to create an environment highly conducive to communal interaction. Although the women generally work individually on their own weavings, other associated activities, such as the "setting up" of the looms, which involves threading many hundreds of strands of wool onto the large wooden frames, necessitates the involvement of at least two people. The process of "finishing" the products is conducted in a small room adjacent to the workshop, where the women sit opposite each other on two large tables, conversing together while they sew. A sense of participation in a shared collective experience pervades the working environment: verbal communication between the trainees centres around the exchanging of praise and advice on the progression of each other's weavings, the latest items of local gossip, and is dominated by much laughter and good humour. Moreover, the strong social bonds which have developed between the ten women have been greatly enhanced by another aspect of their course, namely the international links the group has cultivated.

One of the most important elements of the NOW programme, and, indeed, most other Community Initiatives, is the promotion of transnational partnerships, with participation in exchanges being viewed as a fundamental condition of any grant-aid distributed. Groups who are funded by the same

measure in each member state are encouraged to develop formal relationships with one another across the EU, in order to share information and exchange ideas. The W.E.A.V.E. group were especially enthusiastic about this aspect of the programme, and actually generated more European partners than they were strictly entitled to in the regulations laid down in EU documentation. During the past two years, the trainees have undertaken four two-week visits to stay with other NOW groups located in Austria, Sweden, Germany and the U.K., and acted as hosts to their partners when they have come to Donegal. For the trainees, few of whom have ever travelled outside Ireland, these experiences have represented the most valuable element of the course: as one of them put it to me,

It was grand seeing all these places abroad, and people were really kind. You know, the funny thing is that these groups were really just like us underneath it all, and were involved for the same reasons as we are.

The course has now been running for three years on a full-time basis, and at the time of writing, all but one of the ten trainees have received an official qualification in weaving. Few have made any firm plans for the future, but hope to continue with weaving in some way. One proposal currently being mooted is for the W.E.A.V.E. company to be "slimmed down" and developed into a viable business with perhaps two or three employees. On my final visit to the W.E.A.V.E. group, in November 1997, the group were preparing for a Trade Fair organised by An Taisca, to be held in Letterkenny on the following Saturday, representing one of the few occasions on which the group has actively attempted to promote and sell their "products". However, the aim from the beginning has not been to generate a profit, but to concentrate upon the personal development of the trainees, something reflected in a large notice pinned to the notice board in the office, which states: "It is not what we have achieved, it is what we have overcome".

The environment in which the group works reflects the extent to which the W.E.A.V.E. group, and indeed, the Enterprise Centre as a whole, is dependent financially on the EU. An EU flag flies high above the entrance to the building, the EU symbol is prominently exhibited on various signs located on its outside walls, and also appears on all the promotional literature produced

by the Centre and the development groups based within it. It is a strict EU rule that all projects supported by the structural funds must feature its symbol on related signage and documentation²⁵; in the case of the W.E.A.V.E. group, however, one might argue that the use of the symbol reflects something more than a simple compliance with regulations. The walls of the office are adorned with a number of large, brightly coloured posters advertising the NOW initiative, one of which is framed, and, with the exception of two small weavings produced by members of the group and a notice board, these are the only items which are displayed upon them. A bookshelf in one corner is lined with EU documents, handbooks and reports, and a series of box-files relating to each of the various programmes are stacked on another shelf above the desk. At the entrance to the upstairs workshop, a large hand-painted wooden sign is propped against the door, featuring the W.E.A.V.E. group's logo (depicted, interestingly, in Gothic, not Gaelic, script) and the EU symbol, which has been meticulously reproduced in yellow and blue oils. As the sign also indicates that the project is supported under the EMPLOYMENT initiative, includes the NOW design, and is not actually publicly-displayed, the fact that a member of the group took the time to carefully paint the EU symbol upon it, with each of its five-pointed stars, suggests that the EU has a significance which goes beyond mere gratitude for financial support. Indeed, the iconography associated with the EU is utilised in such a way as to suggest an idolatrous function, with the office akin to an almost shrine-like space, paying homage to the organisation. It should be noted that the office is used by the members of the group only, and is very rarely visited by outsiders: the manner of its decoration is therefore designed primarily for the consumption of the women who work there, and, in this respect, is something which has marked parallels with a teenager's bedroom in which images of pop-, film-, or sport-stars are displayed.²⁶

Two items pinned to the notice-board in the office serve to illustrate further the importance of the EU for the W.E.A.V.E. group. In 1996, the Enterprise Centre was visited by the Euro M.P. for Connaught/Ulster, Pat 'the Cope'

²⁵ See chapter four, note 20.

²⁶ The importance of physical symbols in communicating a particular discourse of development is highlighted by Woost, in his study of participatory development programmes in Sri Lanka:

Exposure to development discourse is a fact of everyday life. Merely walking through the cities, towns, villages and junctions, one is subjected to a cacophony of signs and symbols related to development, from development lottery booths to sign boards, from public spectacles celebrating development (seminars, official openings, speeches and so on) to news headlines and stories extolling the virtues of a government bringing about development to the people (1997: 235-6).

Gallagher, who spent the afternoon in the upstairs workshop talking to the trainees and the two administrators, and upon his departure, gave them his number in the European Parliament, together with an invitation for them to contact him if they needed any help in the future. The women have labelled the number as "the hot-line", and it has pride of place on the notice board. My field notes detailing the first visit I made to Convoy, in April 1997, record that "the women are proud of this link, and spoke at length about it; although they have had no recourse actually to use it as yet, they imagine that it will come in useful at some time in the future". By October, the number was displayed next to a personal communication from the M.E.P., written on European Parliamentary notepaper, thanking the group for their "kind letter" and stating that he "is always willing to be of any assistance"; this refers to an occasion during the summer when they found that they did indeed have a need to avail themselves of the "hot-line".

A party from a NOW project in Austria, one of their transnational partners, was in Dublin on an exchange visit with a group in the capital, and contacted the W.E.A.V.E. group whilst they were in Ireland to ask whether it would be possible for them to travel to Donegal to stay with them. A number of the Austrian women had befriended those from Convoy when the latter had themselves visited Austria during the previous year, and, in the words of one of the trainees, "they were desperate to come up and see us". However, the group had already allocated their entire budget earmarked for transnational exchanges, and, to their surprise, were told by the NOW support structure in Dublin that they were unable to draw down any more funds to cover the costs for the Austrian party's visit, despite the small amount of money which would be required. The administrator of the group then telephoned Pat 'the Cope' Gallagher, who was in Strasbourg at the time, and explained the situation. As one of the women put it to me,

He was great, absolutely fantastic. He contacted Glenveagh [National Park, one of the principal tourist attractions in Donegal], and organised a day out there for us, and we all had a great time, and then got in contact with the County Council, who provided the money for accommodation and a meal out in Letterkenny.

Whilst the EU therefore represents an important ideological resource for the

group, the actual practicalities of managing the project and the intricacies of EU funding mechanisms in Ireland are regarded with rather less enthusiasm by those who have been involved in the administration of the programme. In this respect, the group makes a strong distinction between the EU as a set of policies, manifested in the ethos of the NOW initiative and originating in Brussels, and the EU as a system of procedures, which are organised by the support structure for the programme located in the Department of Enterprise and Employment in Dublin. In the experience of the W.E.A.V.E. group, the support structure is inadequately staffed to deal with the volume of enquiries that they receive.

The reality is that if you have a problem, they don't want to know. If things are going well, they would always be on the phone asking you about it, but it's a different story when you're having difficulties. Often, they can't answer the queries you actually have, as they don't know what's going on either.²⁷

In common with the Development Association in St. Johnston, one of the principal difficulties the group has encountered surrounds retrospective payments, something which has necessitated the negotiation of a £15,000 overdraft facility with the company's bank. As alluded to earlier, European Union funding cannot be utilised for interest payments or bank charges, but the fact that all money is paid in arrears means that an overdraft is essential to cover ongoing costs. The size of the account charges levelled by the bank was such that the group was forced to establish a separate programme of evening classes in computer skills, taught on a voluntary basis by the husband of one of the W.E.A.V.E group's directors and for which participants paid a flat rate per term, in order to cover the additional expenditure incurred. In early 1997, the group received a letter from the NOW support structure in Dublin informing them that their next funding allocation would be far less than they had been expecting, due to a drop in the value of the punt against the ecu²⁸, something which considerably disrupted the plans the group had

²⁷ This type of view appears to be similar to that of expressed by some of the groups involved in the LEADER I programme, who viewed the Department of Agriculture as generally mistrustful to the ethos of "bottom-up" development. As the evaluators of this initiative state:

A predictable criticism from a small number of groups was that the guidelines kept 'moving the goalposts' and in any event were frequently too late in arriving. A further criticism related to delays in getting responses from the Department but there was a general acknowledgement that the Department were [sic] understaffed for the task and that in any event some queries had to be referred by the Intermediary Body to other government departments and in some cases to the EU Commission...In contrast to the limited criticism of the Department, the EU Commission was generally perceived to perform a role which was much more positive in its support of the 'bottom-up' model (Kearney et al 1995: 46).

made for the year. The women's opinion of the Irish government is perhaps encapsulated in the fact that they all believe that the exchequer "holds onto" the money once it has been received from Brussels, in order to accrue interest upon it, and in this case retained it for so long that it was eventually worth far less when it came to be distributed to projects around the country.²⁹

All of the directors of the company now wish to step down, due to concerns over bank debts, which they are ultimately responsible for, and the amount of unpaid work they have undertaken over the past two years. As one of them put it to me,

We're all just local housewives, and most of us are unemployed, but all this has been so exhausting, we just want to finish. Even Marie [referring to a woman who manages an Open Farm at Millbridge, located a short distance outside Convoy] is worn out now- and she would be very strong on the woman's agenda.

The group was hoping that some of the trainees who had not been involved in the project from the beginning would take over the running of the company once their course was completed; having observed the difficulties encountered by the existing board, however, these individuals are now very reluctant to do so. Further grant applications made to the County Enterprise Board and NOW, the latter to expand the computer training courses³⁰, have been unsuccessful, and, at the time of writing, the looms stand idle in the upstairs workshop. Despite these problems of recent months, however, the women are extremely proud of their achievements during the past three years, and are confident that the company will continue in some form. Indeed, it is difficult not to be impressed by the success of the W.E.A.V.E. project, and, more importantly, what those involved have ultimately been able to "overcome".

²⁸ All money paid by the EU to the Irish exchequer is in ecus, not punts.

²⁹ The funding mechanism for EU programmes has caused great difficulties, not only for community groups, but also for development agencies in the county. Interestingly, interviews conducted with a number of senior civil servants in Dublin as part of this research indicate that state agencies and government departments are faced with similar problems themselves. This is because the entire system of payment is retrospective. In other words, receipts for expenditure made by the W.E.A.V.E. group are sent to the NOW support structure in Dublin, which then has to claim on all expenditure made by groups around the country to the European Commission. This issue is discussed further in chapter eight.

³⁰ Community Initiative rules stipulate that projects cannot be funded in two different funding rounds. In other words, new projects have to be designed for each application made to NOW in Dublin.

VI. Discussion and Conclusions.

A number of important issues regarding the nature of community development as it operates in Donegal in the late 1990s can be traced through the various case-studies outlined above. The particular examples that have been utilised here were chosen in order to exemplify the range of activities which voluntary groups are involved in, their versatility in responding to the needs of local areas, and the variability of their experiences in dealing with the processes of applying for and managing development aid. A case-study approach has the advantage of allowing a more detailed contextualisation of the empirical data than would be possible in a generalised overview, for just as the themes of a play are communicated through the words of a cast of characters, so ethnography uses its own *dramatis personae* as conduits for the concerns of the discipline, with the important differences that in this case, the anthropologist is audience as well as author, and the “actors”, of course, are real. As Lawrence Taylor has perceptively noted:

Nothing is so ironic as an anthropology that pretends to give voice to its subjects only to surround brief snippets of the enticingly open speech with a swirling, impenetrable sea of postmodernisms. To spend years in Ireland and to write like that is to have learned nothing (1995: xii).

By organising the data in this way, and offering an insight into how they were generated by locating myself in the foreground of the descriptions above, I hope to have illustrated some of the benefits unique to the ethnographic approach to development research. In order to draw this chapter to a close, however, it is necessary to extrapolate from these micro-scale analyses, by outlining the ways in which they inform the understanding of the social context of community development. These are detailed under various headings, below.

VI.1. Local Development and Poverty.

The descriptions above hinted at some of the methodological issues associated with the difficulties of maintaining a sense of “objective distance” when faced with situations in the field which clearly demand that academic

neutrality should, for once, be jettisoned. In many respects, confronting such ethical dilemmas goes to the very heart of questions surrounding the meaning and purpose of the discipline. From this author's perspective, the value of this particular study lies not only in how it informs theoretical scholarship, in terms of the anthropological study of development and of Ireland, but also the implications it has for policy. After all, the subjects of the analysis all have a role to play in the policy-making process, and if none of them find any utility in the conclusions that are drawn, then ultimately, it should be considered a valueless piece of work. Anthropological research necessarily involves a certain encroachment into people's everyday lives; it should also have the power to affect them in a positive manner as well.

As was seen in chapter two, Donegal is, from the perspectives of many local people, at least, a marginal region in the island of Ireland. The one overriding element uniting virtually all voluntary activity in the county is the motivational basis lying behind it, namely a desire to counter this sense of peripherality. Unlike voluntarism in other parts of western Europe, which is often associated with political activism, that prevalent in Ireland is usually borne out of feelings of isolation, neglect and poverty. To ignore this fact is grossly to misinterpret the reasons why community development has become such a significant component of social life in Donegal, and indeed, in Ireland as a whole.

One important aspect associated with the way "underdevelopment" is conceptualised by people in the county is related to the attribution of blame. Almost invariably, the alleged neglect of the county council is cited as the primary reason for the socio-economic malaise of an area, to the exclusion of virtually every other possible explanation (government policies or prevailing economic conditions, for example). The willingness or ability of county councillors to "deliver" is usually regarded as a product of whether they live in the area or not, and how important they perceive the location to be politically. The lack of power of county councillors, and the weakness of local government in Ireland generally, do not appear to have any effect on the general pervasiveness of this view.³¹

However, the situation is changing. Development officers and the members

³¹ This tendency will be considered in more detail in chapter seven.

of management boards of EU programmes, in adopting the politicians's traditional mantle as mediators between the locale and the bureaucracy, are becoming increasingly important for local people in their efforts to develop their own areas. This could be interpreted as the penetration of the state by the EU, what Held (1991: 129) has characterised as the "hollowing out of the nation state", and a symptom of the increasing significance of globalisation. All of the projects which were discussed in this chapter- from the famine garden in Drumkeen to the factory in St. Johnston- were financed with EU money, and made possible by those individuals involved in development agencies and local groups working together. This, fundamentally, is what the EU is ultimately trying to achieve in its promotion of "partnership" and "bottom-up development", so, despite the problems which have beset the implementation of this model in Donegal, some of which we discuss in the section which follows, the data presented here suggest that these principles are achieving notable results in a number of areas of the county.

VI.2. Local Development and Economics.

As this chapter has demonstrated, community development in Donegal encompasses a highly diverse range of different activities. However, for those groups which have chosen to avail themselves of the opportunities presented by EU development programmes, development quickly becomes a matter of economics. In this respect, two overriding concerns present themselves from the case studies detailed above, namely the conception of development promoted by EU agencies themselves, and the associated problem of matching funding.

In chapter three, we made reference to the various elements which constitute the EU's model of development, and criticised the rather vague manner in which concepts such as "innovation", "animation" and "capacity-building" have been interpreted in EU and Irish documentation. The creation, through programmes such as LEADER, of what Ray describes as local "entities of trade" (1997: 348) assumes a capability and willingness on the part of local people to become involved in business-orientated activities. However, whilst this model may dovetail with the philosophy of development held by certain local organisations in Donegal, community groups in the main usually have neither the expertise nor the inclination to become involved in profit-making

activity, viewing this as the ultimate responsibility of the entrepreneur in partnership with the government. Furthermore, the risks associated with gambling a large amount of what is often their own, or their own community's money into a new venture are usually enough to dissuade most groups from establishing their own business operations. In this way, the implicit perception that animation and capacity-building schemes represent the initial stage in a linear trajectory towards the generation of employment, improved living standards and, ultimately, economic growth is highly problematic. For many involved in community development, economics does not even come into the equation. The overwhelming emphasis on "enterprise" in the development process has therefore had the effect of creating a barrier between such groups and funding agencies, for, although the grant-aiding bodies have funds provided under the various programme sub-measures for community development, these appear "hidden" under the stamp of economics and entrepreneurship to many of those on the outside.

The process of grant-aiding community groups in Donegal is also hampered by the requirement for matching funding. Given that this is a basic requirement of all EU-funded development activity, there appears to be little that could be done to rectify this problem, but it nevertheless remains the case that matching funding has the effect of directing development away from the least prosperous areas and therefore potentially exacerbating the gap between rich and poor in Ireland.³² Having said this, however, there are various options open to community groups to match grant-aid. For example, it is usual for community groups to use any land upon which a new building project is to be sited- be it a new community hall, a resource centre, an industrial unit, a health centre etc.- to cover a proportion of the amount of money they are obliged to provide as private matching funding as stipulated in the regulations of whatever EU grant-aiding programme they may be applying under. Often the land is known to be "communal", particularly

³² The study conducted by Keane and Ó Cinnéide, which examined the experience of various community groups involved in programmes funded by the Shannon Free Airport Development Company (SFADCo) and the ESF during the 1980s, draws broadly similar conclusions to those expressed here. In their conclusion, the authors state:

The capacity to generate and support local economic development is not evenly distributed across all communities. Resource endowments and potentials are different. An important aspect of any programme geared towards promoting local initiatives is a recognition that these differences exist and providing the necessary local capacity is something that is required so that community enterprise can succeed...Yet it is practical issues of organizational [sic] and commercial nature that preoccupy most groups as they seek to develop some types of economic activity that will either provide jobs or additional income for various members of their community. How to help community groups overcome day-to-day difficulties and achieve some concrete short-run results and yet at the same time promote some of the more fundamental elements of community development is the major challenge that faces communities and those who work with them (1986: 289).

when an existing public building is sited upon it, and is held by the residents of the village or townland collectively; on other occasions, a suitable plot of land may become available through the goodwill of a local landowner. Together with the voluntary labour that the members of the group allocate to the project (calculated on the basis of a fixed hourly rate laid down in each EU programme) and any income that they are able to generate through local fund-raising activities, community groups are, in theory at least, able to meet the requirements for matching funding. In practice, however, there is usually a shortfall, for which bank loans are required.

Share-ownership schemes (such as those implemented by the W.E.A.V.E. and St. Johnston Development groups) represent another strategy groups are able to use. These are, however, relatively rare, relying in the main on a sense of shared solidarity between residents which may be lacking in the more impoverished towns and villages of the region, as well as those close to the border, where religious tensions often preclude the possibility of creating inclusive structures to facilitate community development activity. Furthermore, the requirement for groups to provide an initial outlay covering the funds required for a particular project in their entirety, and then claim the money back afterwards, may also place unrealistic burdens upon them: as we saw in Convoy and St. Johnston, groups are often forced to turn to the banking sector and guarantee loans themselves, which represents an onerous responsibility for individual committee members. Perhaps surprisingly, interviews with Credit Union officials have indicated that their relationships with community groups is not well established in Donegal, and few groups have received funding from them beyond modest sponsorship money provided for specific functions.³³ Given the limited income-generating capacity of community-led events, the banking sector remains a major source of matching funds.

VI.3. Development and Gender.

It was stated at the outset that underlying patterns of social life are often reflected in the organisation of development activity in Ireland. Indeed, it might be argued that the meetings of local development groups represent

³³ This finding is consistent with research conducted by Curtin and Varley in the late 1980s:

Except for a few localities...credit unions have largely confined themselves to supplying low-interest finance to individuals and have steered clear of advancing money to community groups for local development purposes (1989b: 108).

occasions where the component facets of social morphology are at their most visible: they may be seen as “social dramas” which serve to heighten and expose certain phenomena that would normally remain latent and disguised. Gender relations represent perhaps the most readily observable manifestation of this idea in practice. In Drumkeen, for example, we noted how the seating arrangements within the community hall where meetings were held was organised by gender, to the extent that married couples were reluctant to sit together during the proceedings. This physical separation was reflected in the division of labour for the opening event, in which women were assigned roles associated with their domestic status as wives and mothers: preparing tea and sandwiches, making the bunting, serving the soup, etc.

A number of commentators have characterised Irish society as being akin to a “private patriarchy”, arguing that the traditional influence of the Catholic Church combined with an education and employment system which militates against female participation in the “public” arena of socio-economic activity, have served to reinforce a set of social values which emphasise male dominance over women. In the view of Mahon, “Ireland [is] one of the last bastions of patriarchal dominance” (1994: 1279), something which she argues is borne out empirically by certain socio-demographic indicators such as high rates of fertility, a confinement of women to the domestic sphere, low levels of female economic participation, and discriminatory systems of taxation and welfare. Her thesis, along with those offered by other authors such as Curtin et al (1987), Pyle (1990) and Wickham (1982), who make broadly similar claims, is persuasive, and appears to be reflected in some of our examples described above.³⁴

However, Ireland is in a state of rapid transition, and previous “certainties” regarding its social structure can no longer be assigned the pre-eminent status that they once were. Levels of female participation in the labour force have risen from 8% in 1972 to 32% in 1996, which is close to the EU average of 34% (Central Statistics Office 1996). There has also been a welter of legislation passed in recent years aimed at improving the status of women in society, which includes acts surrounding family planning, maternity, family law,

³⁴ In relation to the development sector, research conducted by O'Neill (1996) also supports these findings. She discovered that in relation to the twelve partnerships which were established under the Programme for Economic and Social Progress (1991-1993), women constituted only one-fifth of board membership nationally. Similarly, the author notes that in the case of the 36 County Enterprise Boards, only 123 of the 504 members are female (24%) (O'Neill 1996: 128).

status of children, divorce, child care, unfair dismissal and equal pay (O'Neill 1996: 129). One may suggest that these changes are echoed in the organisation of voluntarism in Donegal, which is *overwhelmingly a female-orientated sphere of activity*.

By way of illustration, databases of community groups in Donegal compiled by the Community Workers Co-operative and the Donegal Local Development Company during 1997 detail the existence of 346 groups³⁵ active in the county, of which 216, or 62%, are chaired or managed by women.³⁶ Even these figures underestimate the extent of women's involvement in voluntary organisations, since by far the highest proportion of the types of groups listed (94) are specifically geared towards female concerns. Examples include women's support groups, women's political associations, mother's unions, local branches of the ICA, parent and toddler groups, crèches and playgroups. In the case of those groups whose activities are specifically orientated towards development, women are also over-represented, something highlighted by the fact that they account for 65% of the membership of the Donegal Community Workers Co-op. In terms of the active membership of this organisation, the proportion of women is even higher.³⁷ Additionally, there is also an over-representation of women among professional development actors working in both sectoral interest groups and the LEADER and Partnership Companies. Of the fifteen staff of the DLDC, for example, twelve are female, a ratio which is mirrored in the case of the Inishowen Partnership Company and Inishowen Rural Development Ltd. and a reflection of the fact that the background of many of these individuals is in voluntary development activity.

The scale of community development activity in Donegal- with approximately one voluntary group per 350 people living in the county (a figure which falls to 228 people if one discounts those under the age of fifteen and over the age of 70³⁸)- is such that it may be suggested with a reasonable degree of

³⁵ It is widely accepted among those involved in the development sector in Donegal that these databases are incomplete, and underestimate the number of groups in existence. Indeed, both organisations asked me to update their lists for them from my own research data while I was living in the county.

³⁶ These findings are in contrast to those offered by Byrne in relation to a survey conducted in N.W. Connemara, where, in a total of 62 voluntary organisations, she found that the male participation rate exceeded that of females. At a management level, there were 50% more men involved than women (cited in Byrne et al 1991: 147). Although I am unable to provide any systematic explanation for this apparent discrepancy, the level of grant-aid available to "female-orientated" groups has certainly increased markedly during the past six years, through funding programmes such as the PRP, the LDP and NOW (cf. O'Neill 1996: 130). As Crickley has noted, the "men of the suits" of the 1980s have been replaced by the "women in jeans" in the community development arena in the 1990s (1996: 26).

³⁷ See chapter four, section III.2.

confidence that local development is having a significant effect upon the status of women in the socio-economic life of the county. The existence of child-care and support groups, run by women, for women, in almost every population centre in Donegal has provided many with the opportunity to share their experiences with one another, re-orientate themselves away from the domestic environment, and return to work, often by availing themselves of the increased scope for paid employment in the community sector facilitated by EU grant-aid. In the case of the W.E.A.V.E. group, it was noted how one of the primary motivational factors underpinning the women's involvement was in order to, in vernacular parlance, "get out of the house", and that the work itself, along with the environment in which it was conducted, were organised in such a way as to promote communality and friendship between the participants. Despite the difficulties which the group had encountered in managing EU funds, it appears that principal aims and methods of the NOW programme were mirrored in the ethos which the women themselves held, and this specific case-study may therefore be regarded as an example in microcosm of a much wider trend taking place across the county (or, indeed, the country).³⁹ It also exemplifies the correspondence which often exists between the principles of development promoted by the EU and the ideology of voluntarism prevalent in Ireland, an observation which is explicitly acknowledged by some of the more enlightened members of community groups with whom I worked in the county. So whilst women undoubtedly remain underrepresented in the more "formal" (or visible) arena of development in Ireland, the data presented in this chapter suggest that this is not reflected at the voluntary level, where profound changes appear to be occurring.

VI.4. Development and (as?) Religion.

It is extremely difficult to generalise about the relationship between religion and local development in Donegal. Religion is obviously a highly-sensitive issue in Ulster, and this factor, combined with an ethic of EU-funded development activity which is specifically geared towards promoting cross-cultural co-operation and understanding (and therefore further exacerbates the general unwillingness of people to speak about religion⁴⁰), acts in such a way as to militate against the generation of any firm conclusions which

³⁸ Figures based on data given in the Census of Population 1996, and Donegal County Enterprise Board 1995

would have any type of universal application across the county. All one is able to do is to suggest ways in which religious affiliation impinges upon the nature of the development process, by drawing from personal experience derived from the time spent with various organisations in the region.

First of all, it will be clear from the empirical data that have been presented so far that local religious leaders are often crucial to the promotion of development in Donegal. Father Curran, Father Carr and many others like them have followed in the footsteps of Father McDyer in attempting to galvanise a "culture" of local participation in development projects in their respective areas. Furthermore, the parish priest or vicar is often the pre-eminent public figure in a village or town, and is usually able to draw upon a wide range of personal contacts and friendships in order to garner the information and expertise necessary to apply successfully for grant-aid. This was the case with Fr. Carr and Fr. Curran, both of whom represented the principal point of contact for their respective organisations and utilised their friendships with key individuals within funding bodies when planning local initiatives.⁴¹ For these men, development is not only about money, however, but also includes an emancipatory aspect, surrounding such goals as encouraging educational achievement, bringing different congregations and social groups together, harnessing the inherent potential of individuals, generating a more positive outlook on life. Viewed from this perspective, local development is akin to a religious activity, and ultimately rooted in the teachings of the Christian Church.

Given the status of Donegal as a constituent county of Ulster, it is obvious that the significance of religion for development goes far beyond the mere involvement of religious leaders in the process. In reflecting the demographic make-up of the county, for instance, local development is something which is conducted predominantly by Catholics. It must be stressed, however, that

³⁹ As Laffan has suggested:

In the area of equal rights, there are all gains and no losses in the Irish context. The Community's legislative programme has provided an incentive to successive Irish governments to develop policies in this area and the Commission's monitoring of the implementation has ensured that directives are passed into Irish law (1991: 250).

⁴⁰ This point is dealt with further in chapter six, section IV.1.

⁴¹ The brokerage role of local religious leaders is well-rehearsed in the anthropological literature. In Rosemary Harris' pseudonymous Fermanagh village of "Ballybeg", for example, the Protestant clergyman was regularly called upon by members of his congregation to act on their behalf in their dealings with officialdom, and as such, was regarded as the legitimate "leader" of their community (Harris 1961). The importance placed upon religious leadership by this author tends to contradict the views of earlier scholars (most obviously, Arensberg and Kimball), who attributed only a limited function to the clergy in this respect.

on a day-to-day level, relations between the various religious communities in Donegal appear to be extremely harmonious, something which the population prides itself upon, and the religious persuasion of one's friends, neighbours or colleagues is largely unimportant for the overwhelming majority of people in the county. People live together, work together and drink together, and the geographic segregation of social groups common in Northern Ireland has no parallel south of the border.⁴² Whilst the county is probably the least affected by the existence of differing religious affiliations in comparison to other counties of Ulster (including Monaghan and Cavan), it is, however, impossible to ignore the divisive influence which this can sometimes have in relation to development activity in eastern Donegal. The existence of separate schooling systems, for example, militates against the creation of local structures which reflect different population groups present within a given area, since development groups often have their origins in previously-existing associations geared towards the needs of children (youth clubs, playgroups, etc.). There is hence a distinct lack of an "infrastructural" base upon which to build methods of interdenominational co-operation, and because organisations which incorporate such an ethic do not evolve naturally, they therefore remain relatively rare.⁴³ Simple prejudice also has a part to play as well. A comment made during one of the meetings of the Drumkeen Development Association hinted at the problems which this can sometimes cause, and in chapter six, a number of other examples will be highlighted in greater detail. For now, it will be enough to note that local development activity in Donegal is influenced by religious affiliation, and is something which serves to undermine efforts by EU agencies and other such bodies to foster the creation of genuinely inclusive structures at local levels.

⁴² To this, a caveat should be added. As was described in chapter two, the proportion of Protestants in the overall population is highest in areas adjacent to the border, and lowest in the mountainous hinterland and along the western coastal strip.

⁴³ As Sacks has pointed out:

The castelike system of Protestant domination prevented the formation of horizontal affinities, and the integration of the two groups at village level. Even when Donegal Protestants became absorbed, in 1921, into the overwhelmingly Catholic south, this separation persisted. Though Ulster Protestants became quite Irish in manner and speech, their culture and material values set them off from their Catholic neighbours. Today in Donegal, despite the intimacy of community life, the two groups live apart. Separated from each other geographically, they live, from birth to grave, separate lives, marrying endogamously, and maintaining different churches, schools, sports teams and associations (1976: 26).

In this passage, one might suggest that Sacks overstates the degree to which the two religious communities are divided in Donegal. Although he conducted his fieldwork during the 1960s, there is no reason to suspect that the two communities have become more integrated since then: north of the border, the reverse has been the case (cf. McAllister 1983: 304-6; Ruane and Todd 1996: 64-65; Sluka 1995). Thus, apart from in terms of the very general intracounty patterns that were discussed in chapter two, it is not true to state that Protestants and Catholics are "separated geographically", and nor is it true that they live "separate lives". However, his observations concerning endogamous marriage and different social and religious associations, which were also noted by Rosemary Harris in "Ballybeg" (see Harris 1961: 140; 1972:), are well-made, and, in this respect, the data presented in this study indicate that little has altered in the intervening period.

Smyth has emphasised the importance of local histories and biographies for the understanding of the complexities of social life in Ireland, and argues that it is only by mapping out these highly variably territorial attributes (what he labels collectively as the “community information field”) that a complete picture of the emic categories of social organisation may be gained (1986: 6-8). In a similar way, Taylor has perceptively observed that:

Contemporary patterns of settlement and social relations in all Irish rural communities are only the most recent stage of an ongoing historical dialectic, involving the continuing adaptation of peasants [sic] not only to local circumstances, but to the demands and influences of a ruling elite (1980: 169).

The views of these authors are important for this analysis, since the case-studies presented in this chapter indicate the strong relationship which exists between history and local development in Donegal. In Drumkeen, for example, it was noted how a particular episode in Irish history, the Great Famine, was utilised as an organising principle through which to harness the imagination and collective efforts of local people towards improving the environment of the village. For those involved in the development association, the value in educating a younger generation about the famine lay not so much in improving their knowledge of Irish history, although this was important, but in allowing them to view their own particular situation from another perspective (hence the phrase “owning our past” in their submission for grant-aid). In St. Johnston, similarly, the legacy of the Ulster Plantation was cited by Mns. Carr as the primary explanation for the social and economic ills currently being faced by many of his parishioners, in creating what he labelled as a “culture of dependency” in the area. Whilst the deterministic reasoning behind this assumption is highly dubious, and can be questioned on a number of different levels, the demographic basis underlying his arguments appear to be supported by our review of previous scholarship on the Plantation given in chapter two. In the case of the W.E.A.V.E group, the history of the area was again at the forefront of their activities, its salience reflected in the decision to use hand as opposed to power looms in the workshop.

Whilst all these examples incorporate a sense of “invented tradition”, in terms of the way history is used as a means of framing experience and interpreting present realities, they also indicate the importance of historical continuity in Donegal. This is something which derives, fundamentally, from the strong association between self and place in the county. The low level of geographical mobility is such that individual towns and villages are connected to one another not only by relative distance, but also by personal association. This concept also extends beyond the county, in that the language people often employ to describe places favoured as destinations for emigrants, such as Boston, New York or London, makes them appear closer than another location in Donegal. By way of illustration, a friend of mine mentioned one day that he had an aunty who lived in the London Borough of Sutton and, when I replied by saying that I used to live in London, he asked me, in all seriousness, whether I had met her during my time there. In referring on another occasion to his cousin, however, he told me that he hardly ever saw him, because he lives “way up beyond Creeslough”, a town fifteen miles away from his own home. To take another example, a young man whose parents had been born and brought up in an area about twenty miles from where they now lived, in a house they built following their marriage in the early 1960s, once told me that his family were still considered to be “blow ins” (outsiders) by a number of the older residents of their “adopted” home village. This sense of place is also reflected in the way people are referred to: in describing someone who lives outside one’s home area, for example, it is common to distinguish them from someone else who may have the same name by adding the label “...of Carrigart/ Kerrykeel/Dunfanaghy etc.” after their surname.

This conceptualisation of “place” in Donegal gives rise to an extremely fragmented pattern of local development, with almost every townland, village or housing estate represented by a local community group. A profoundly territorial leitmotif, combined with a predominantly apolitical agenda, means that community development groups rarely act collectively, and instead operate essentially as competitors for the attentions of the county council, EU agencies and other grant-aiding institutions.⁴⁴ This sense of competition can be discerned in the comments regarding the new water main in Drumkeen,

⁴⁴ Sacks has argued that the lack of political interest groups in Ireland generally is primarily due to the organisation of the political system, the personalised nature of which serves constantly to undermine any tendencies towards collective demands being made on the state (1976.: 52-53). This issue will be considered further in chapter seven, section VI.

and also the attitude of the St. Johnston residents towards the Gaeltacht; a number of other examples will be outlined in chapter six. This failure of community groups to organise collectively has, one might suggest, profoundly curtailed their effectiveness in lobbying for support from the local authority, the government and, most importantly, the EU.

* * * *

The case-studies outlined in this chapter have been chosen in order to demonstrate the social context in which local development takes place in Donegal. It is clear that the picture of the “local community” which emerges from them is very different to that which is held by the EU or the professional development sector discussed in previous chapters. Far from being a homogenous, bounded entity, it is cross-cut by numerous competing tensions which are rooted in the social structure of Donegal- and Irish- society. In this way, the antagonistic relationship between the discourses of development characteristic of the two sectors has significantly undermined the ability of community groups to become involved in the development process. The ethic of local involvement built into programmes such as LEADER II, the LDP and the Peace and Reconciliation Programme model, while laudable, assumes that there is an unlimited, latent store of voluntarism present in the locale waiting to be tapped. On one level the sheer number of community groups active in the county would appear to bear out this assumption; however, many people in Donegal also view the effectiveness of development programmes in less-than-positive terms. This means that, all too often, responsibility for local development resides with small groups of committed volunteers who do not enjoy the support of the majority of people who live around them. Moreover, the practicalities of managing EU aid in an unpaid capacity often places unrealistic burdens on those who choose to become involved in the development process, something which may severely dampen their commitment and enthusiasm towards the projects they are managing. EU agencies have attempted to address this through their “animation” and “capacity building” activities, and their employment of development workers to provide support for community groups. This is a subject we will address in the next chapter, in which we consider the direct interaction between the professional and voluntary sectors in Donegal.

Chapter Six.

Community Groups and the European Union.

I. Introduction.

In the previous chapter, the nature of community development activity, as it exists in County Donegal in the late 1990s was outlined. We stressed how particular conceptions of “locality” and “community” influence the way in which voluntary groups operate, and argued that the social context of development activity is of paramount importance in understanding the motivational basis for development actions emanating from the locale. In introducing the professional development sector in Donegal in chapter four, we highlighted the significance of the particular bureaucratic discourse associated with European Union programmes for development planning in the county. It was suggested that the language associated with the professional development sector acts in such a way as to create a profound social division between the employees of development agencies and those whom EU funding initiatives are designed to help, as well as reinforcing social cohesion among the foregoing group.

In the case studies of community development groups which were utilised to illustrate these ideas in chapter five, the EU appeared only in the background as an amorphous, almost mercurial entity, physically and geographically removed from the centre stage of development activity. The primary aim of this present chapter, then, is to bring the EU once again into the foreground, through an examination of the *interaction* between the community and professional development sectors. A case-study approach will again be employed in order to illustrate the way in which the tensions between the ideological values, discursive strategies and modes of operation characteristic of each of the two spheres can disrupt the process of communication existing between them.

It is only very recently that community groups in Donegal have begun to have direct contact with the representatives of development agencies, in anything like a formal manner. This is due principally to the fact that most of the development programmes aimed specifically at the community sector

have been established only for a relatively short time in Donegal, usually for no more than three years. It is also a result of a general lack of promotion of the agencies' activities, and a shortage of staff, most of whom are required to be full-time administrators within the offices of the various organisations. As we have noted, the Peace and Reconciliation Programme is represented by only one paid employee in Donegal. During the fieldwork period, I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to participate in a number of meetings between community groups and employees of various EU grant-aiding bodies, experiences which provided a unique insight into the mechanisms through which the often conflicting aims, principles and methodologies of development held by the professional and voluntary sectors are reified and negotiated through social interaction. Descriptions of three such meetings are presented in this chapter, each followed by an interpretative discussion highlighting some of the issues which emerge from them. In the final section, we explore the theoretical significance of the foregoing data.

II. Kilmacrennan.

Kilmacrennan is a small village of 836 inhabitants, located on the main N56 road to the west of Letterkenny, and is typical of the many hundreds of settlements of a similar size scattered throughout the county. There are three shops, two pubs, a restaurant and "chipper", a health centre, a bed and breakfast establishment, a Garda station, a community hall, a sports field and a small national school. The village is an important ecclesiastical centre, containing a large Catholic chapel and Church of Ireland church, with a small Presbyterian church located about two miles away, and is usually cited as the location where St. Columbkille was educated and ordained as a priest.¹ His accepted place of birth is sited in Garten, about six miles to the south. In addition, Doon Well, one of the most popular and potent "curing wells" in the county, lies a short distance from the village. Kilmacrennan is also home to the Lurgyvale Thatched Cottages, a series of restored farm buildings which contain an impressive exhibition of traditional farming machinery, and play host to Irish music and dancing nights every Thursday during the summer months. There are also a number of voluntary organisations active within the village which cater for various sections of the population. These include the tidy towns committee, the festival committee,

¹ St. Columba's, the Catholic chapel, contains a font in which St. Columbkille was said to have been baptized, in 497 AD.

the youth club, the Pioneers, various sports clubs, local branches of An Taisca, the ICA and the Irish Farmers Association, and the development association.

II.1. The Kilmacrennan Development Association.

The development association is run by a small number of voluntary activists, all of whom may loosely be described as “leading lights” in village affairs. Most are involved in the other local organisations in some capacity. Although established primarily as a lobbying organisation, in order to put pressure on the County Council (via local councillors) to improve the physical environment of the village, much of the energies of those involved has been directed towards one major issue in recent years. For at least a decade, the group has been attempting to raise funds to facilitate the replacement of the old community hall, a corrugated iron structure built during the 1920s, which stands on an area of land known locally as the “Cow Market”, or “Fairgreen”, adjacent to the main street. Most people in Kilmacrennan agree that disputes between various factions within the village, along with a general ignorance of the procedures involved in applying for grant-aid, have been the primary factors hampering progress on the project. Although it is still in use- for dances, meetings of the youth club, and music lessons for local children- the building has recently become very dilapidated, to the extent that, in 1996, the public liability insurance policy held by the association was not renewed by the company, on the grounds of safety.

This event brought matters to a head, and in early 1997, a public meeting was convened in order to discuss the possibility of accessing funding from one of the EU programmes to build a new hall. A local Independent Fianna Fáil councillor together with her party leader, Harry Blaney, were in attendance to offer their support, and to give advice to the group on the various sources of grant-aid. They explained about the Task Force for Peace and Reconciliation, and both promised to support the scheme from their allocations under the County Council’s development fund. However, the participants in the meeting were unable to agree as to the primary function that the new hall should have, with some arguing that it should be large enough to cater for indoor sporting activities, such as five-a-side football, whilst others were of the opinion that it should be used primarily for local

dances. Despite these disagreements, the committee of the association continued to progress with the development of plans for the hall, and a series of meetings were held during the summer of 1997 to decide on the design of the premises.

One of the members of the committee was formerly a voluntary representative on the management board of the Donegal Local Development Company, and through his contacts with the company, arranged for one of their employees, a newly-appointed "community link worker" (funded through a grant provided by the Peace and Reconciliation Programme), to attend subsequent meetings of the association. Following the first meeting, the DLDC representative drew up a questionnaire, in order to canvass the opinions of the residents of the village regarding the proposed functions of the hall, and promised to "have a word" with the development officer of the Peace and Reconciliation Programme to enquire into the possibility of the group drawing down funds from this source. An outline application for funding was submitted to the Task Force by the local councillor on behalf of the group, but this was subsequently rejected, on the grounds that (according to the councillor), the proposal had not been formally costed.

The following extract from my fieldwork diary describes a meeting between two members of the committee and the community link worker held one afternoon in the late summer of 1997.

The meeting took place in the dining room of the house of Seamus O'Donnell, where he lives with his daughter. It was attended by Seamus himself, a retired farmer in his late 60s, Anne, a younger woman who currently chairs the development association, Thomas, a graduate in his late twenties, and one of two community link workers employed by the DLDC, and myself. The table was laid with home-made sandwiches and cake, and the obligatory pot of tea stood on the surface of the large range in the corner.

Thomas began by passing around copies of the questionnaire, which was laser-printed on three sides of high-quality paper and invited respondents to indicate the types of activities which they would like to see in the new hall. Anne and Seamus began by discussing how far the distribution of the questionnaire should extend around the parish; it was decided that Termon

[a small village located about two miles west] should not be included as “they already have their own hall”, a converted classroom in the national school there. Whilst both the committee members were generally pleased with the document, Seamus questioned the level of detail of the “social activities” section, in which only one form of dancing was mentioned. For Thomas’ benefit, he proceeded to give a lengthy explanation as to the reasons why it was important to list ceilidh-, step- and set-dancing separately, outlining the crucial differences between them and the number of people who would usually participate in each type. The hall would have to contain a large enough floor area to accommodate the six reels of a set dance, he said, since there would be twelve people involved at any one time, whereas a ceilidh dance only encompasses three reels and can therefore be performed in a smaller area. Furthermore, set dancing is more suitable for elderly participants, as the fewer number of reels allows the protagonists more time to rest between each dance, (as opposed to a ceilidh, where “you’d be rarely off your feet”). Although somewhat bemused by the significance which Seamus clearly placed upon the suitability of the premises for dancing, Thomas promised to adjust the questionnaire accordingly.

Anne expressed her concerns over the name for the new hall, and took issue over the designation given to the proposed building as a “community hall” in the questionnaire. In order to illustrate the origins of her general opposition to this term, she described a public meeting which had been held in 1992, when a sub-committee of the development association had been appointed to oversee the replacement of the existing premises. This group, together with the parish priest and the owner of the Lurgyvale Thatched Cottages, visited a community hall which, at the time, had recently been completed by a development group based in Bloody Foreland in the west of the county, a project facilitated partly through grant aid provided by the Gaeltacht LEADER programme (MFG). Impressed by the apparent success of this venture, the Kilmacrennan association started to formulate plans to access funding for a building of an equivalent size in their own village. However, the Bloody Foreland group soon discovered that, due to the amount of matching funds which had been required initially, most of which had been raised through a large bank loan, they were unable to generate sufficient income through the hiring of the hall to cover the interest payments on the debts incurred by its construction and the costs of its day-to-day maintenance. On hearing of

these difficulties, a number of members of the Kilmacrennan association were persuaded that they should scale down their ambitions, and abandon the labelling of the proposed building as a “community hall”. The legacy of this particular episode in the development group’s history has lingered, however, and many residents in the village remain convinced of the benefits of planning for a larger hall than the one that currently exists. In Anne’s words,

We don’t want it to be called a community hall, because that’s what they want, and we’ll be back at stage one again. They want a big sports hall and everything, and we’ve already decided that we’re not having that. And if we say community centre, they’ll want a big place like they have in Letterkenny², and we just haven’t got the land and won’t get the money for somewhere like that.

Thomas suggested that “village resource centre” would be a more suitable title, particularly as one of the primary considerations should be maximising the number of different groups who are able to utilise the premises, “so they can all draw down their own funds”. Seamus and Anne listed the different groups which exist in Kilmacrennan, citing the GAA, the IFA, the ICA, the Youth Club, the senior citizen’s group, the Pioneers, and the marching band as those which would benefit most from the presence of a new hall.

The discussion then turned to the funding requirements for the building. The two committee members explained that, whilst the development association currently has no money, they are hopeful that the pledges given by two local councillors will be matched by others from the Milford electoral area. Thomas was of the opinion that the group should ask the councillors to provide written confirmation of the promises they have made, as this firm evidence of matching funding will increase the likelihood of approval when they come to submit a grant application to a development agency. Seamus and Anne responded to this suggestion with a certain degree of hesitancy, and seemed unsure as to the power councillors have in this regard, believing the County Manager to have the ultimate say in the distribution of development fund allocations. As Seamus stated,

² This comment refers to the Letterkenny Community Centre, a large building located on the Pearce Road at the eastern edge of the town.

Anne [local councillor] is going to bring it up at the next meeting of the Task Force, but whether we get anywhere, I don't know.³

The group have already begun fund-raising activities, with a card evening in the local pub arranged for the following Sunday, and a sponsored walk and 'Irish night' scheduled for later in the month. The festival committee has also set aside £500 from the money raised during the festival held in July, which will be released once the association has been allocated grant-aid from another source. In addition, the group plans to sell raffle tickets, both to people in the parish, and to emigres living in other parts of Ireland or America.

The thing is, if you've bought a ticket from someone in another place round about here, then they'll do the same for you when you're trying to raise money.

They have written to James McDaid, the local T.D., who informed them that he would enquire into the possibility of accessing funds from the National Lottery on their behalf.

He's bound to have good contacts with people in Dublin there, and could really help us out. He could go along to a meeting and say, 'this group are just starting out, it's a poor area, and they need some money'. We've a real advantage with him coming from Termon.

Seamus expressed his concern that the application for funding should be submitted to an agency very soon, preferably within the next few weeks.

I mean, I would have been up to Fanad to see the hall they've got up there, and they've got these nice paintings on the walls with pictures of the mountains and animals, and a lovely new floor. Now, I'm not saying I would begrudge them it, but we've been sitting here in Kilmacrennan all these years and had nothing, and I would be concerned that we're going to be here for another twenty years with nothing either. We've got to get going while

³ It is clear that Seamus was confusing the Task Force and the councillor's development fund here. (With reference to the development fund, see chapter seven, section V.3.1.).

the money's still there....The money coming into Donegal now is really unbelievable, it really is- I look in the local papers and see all the grants being given out, but Kilmacrennan's never mentioned...

In response to this remark, Thomas explained that, since the last meeting that he had attended, he had talked to the development officer from the Peace and Reconciliation Programme, and was hopeful that the group would be able to apply to this initiative for at least a proportion of the funding that would be required. He then unzipped the briefcase which he had brought with him, and withdrew an application pack for the programme, carefully wiping his sleeve across its cover before handing it over. Anne accepted the pack from him, and held it reverently in her hands. After examining the application form, Seamus stated that he thought that the group should draw upon the resources of the people in the village to build the hall.

There's a lot of skilled people here- bricklayers, plasterers, welders, electricians- who would certainly be prepared to give up, say, two hours on an evening or a Saturday morning to do some work for it. There's Eddie McGettigan⁴ too, who would come down and demolish the old one for us too, no trouble, just to cut down on the expenses, you know?

However, Thomas stressed that the agency would insist that the work was advertised in the press and that it was allocated to a "registered contractor" [i.e. a contractor approved by the agency].

Some groups can't understand this. They'll say, 'why do we have to spend £500 on this here advert when we could be spending the money on more useful things?'. But that's the way it is, I'm afraid.

Thomas outlined the various actions that the group would have to undertake before they would be in a position to complete the application form. These include formulating a written constitution, the appointment of a board of management representing "all sides of the community", and the presentation of official evidence that the association has legal entitlement to the ownership

⁴ Eddie McGettigan, a prominent property developer, lives in the village. His company has developed a number of new housing estates and commercial premises in Letterkenny in recent years, and also owns the Lurgyvale Thatched Cottages.

of the land upon which the hall is to be built. As well as representing a precondition for grant aid, the significance of the latter lies in the fact that the land may be used as collateral to cover a substantial proportion of the matching funding which the association will be required to submit for the financing of the project. Seamus explained that, although the land was originally held by five trustees, no-one in the village is quite sure who possesses the deeds now. He listed the trustees by name, using the present tense throughout:

Now, there's Eddie Boyce and John O'Donnelly...who else?... Marie Doherty...

Thomas asked whether someone from the association could contact them, to which Seamus replied that the last trustee had passed away 21 years ago, and he was unsure as to whether they had had any right to the ownership of the land in the first place. Both Seamus and Anne suspected that the land actually belonged to the Leitrim Estate, and had been seized by the residents of the village during the "Troubles" [referring to the Civil War], when the community hall was first erected. Anne said that she would examine the land register held in the County Council's offices in Lifford to try to discover the present whereabouts of the deeds, if they were still in existence.

The meeting was curtailed when Thomas informed us that he had to leave to attend another meeting in Letterkenny, but he promised to be present at the next gathering of the development association, to be held in two weeks time.

II.2. Discussion.

This apparently innocuous meeting, which lasted barely an hour, may be utilised to illustrate a number of important themes associated with the nature of community development activity as it is experienced in Donegal. Although the quotations used in the description above are necessarily selective, and are not reproduced in a verbatim form- being written-up from memory immediately afterwards- the comments that were made by the participants, together with the particular subtext(s) which underpinned them, reflect a series of fundamental issues associated with the social context in which the

grant-aiding process occurs. As has been stressed throughout this study, development itself does not happen in a vacuum, and it is not a “natural” process; on the contrary, it is governed by the operation of a plethora of social factors which are collectively responsible for determining the relationship between ideas, experiences and ultimate outcomes. This meeting therefore symbolises a confluence in the dynamic interaction between the bureaucracy and the locale, the point at which the aims and values of the EU, embodied in the community link worker who is ultimately a representative of the organisation and is financially dependent upon it, and those of the indigenous population of Donegal, a role adopted here by Anne and Seamus, conjoin. (Thomas himself is a native of Northern Ireland). It is therefore crucial to locate each participant within the social nexus of which they are a part, in order fully to understand the practicalities of EU development activity.

So why, fundamentally, is the building of a new hall considered to be so important to the development association? The slow progress which has been made in replacing the old premises is a source of great frustration for its members, illustrated by the comment made by Seamus in the meeting. As well as the new buildings in Fanad and the converted school in Termon, development groups in the nearby towns of Milford and Ramelton are also in the process of drawing down funds for their own premises.⁵ A number of residents of the village are keen Irish dancers, and perform every Thursday night during the summer in the Thatched Cottages, events which attract people from throughout the county and even from the north.⁶ Between October and May, the cottages are used only for practice, and are not open to the public. The main room is large and draughty and, being heated only by a small fireplace at one end, is generally unsuitable for social activities of any kind during the winter months; the ancient flagstones on the floor are also singularly uncondusive for dancing. The new hall will therefore provide a suitable practice venue in the period when the cottages are closed, as well as

⁵ With reference to Ramelton, see section IV, below.

⁶ One group travels in a minibus from Omagh each Thursday during July and August. The importance of dancing in Donegal has been emphasised by Nic Suibhne, who details the wide range of dances traditionally performed at significant occasions (such as weddings wakes, New years Eve, St. Patrick's night, or the leaving of emigration “convoys”), during the year. As well as sets, these included quadrilles, polkas, germans, waltzes, lancers and “highland schottisches”. He notes that the distinctive musical tradition in the county- the “Donegal style”- remains

alive and vibrant and wholly indigenous, significantly at a time when media influences have contributed to a large degree to the erosion of many distinctive local and regional styles. In Donegal, the *corpus* of musical material has, to a large extent, survived intact (1995: 740-741).

The music and dancing performed in the Thatched Cottages in Kilmacrennan, as well as in many pubs around the area, testifies to the veracity of this observation.

acting as a focus for the meetings of other groups, which are currently held in various locations, including the old hall, private houses, the classroom of the school, a room in the health centre or, most commonly, the bars of the two local pubs.

Whilst the development association is ostensibly an interdenominational organisation, its priorities reflect the dominant religious affiliation of the residents of the parish (exemplified by the importance placed upon Irish dancing), and it is notable that, of the groups listed in the description above, only one- the Irish Farmers Association- incorporates Protestant members.⁷ In some respects, this is understandable, given that the Protestant congregation of the district already possesses its own community hall, located in the grounds of the Anglican church in Kilmacrennan, Saint Finian and Saint Mark. The former function of the building was as a Robertson Board⁸ primary school, which was converted in 1969 upon the school's closure, and is larger in size than its counterpart on the Fairgreen, its white-washed walls and indoor carpeting contrasting sharply with the broken windows and rusty exterior of the other "public" structure in the village. The hall is used exclusively by Church of Ireland affiliates for the meetings of their own community organisations, which include the Girls' Brigade (run jointly by the Church of Ireland and Presbyterian ministries), the Sunday School and the Raphoe Diocesan Youth Council, under whose auspices various events, such as parish bazaars, quiz nights and sales of work, are periodically held there. None of the Catholic residents of the village would ever consider using the C. of I. parish hall; as the building is manifestly ill-equipped to cater for indoor sporting activities, however, the real meaning of the word "they" in the comments made by Anne, above, becomes apparent.

Although it is important not to exaggerate the extent to which the different religious affiliations of the people of Kilmacrennan represent a source of division among village residents, factors such as separate schooling systems and largely endogamous patterns of marriage⁹, along with the existence of

⁷ By way of illustration, I was told on several occasions that it was usual for the meetings of the development association to be announced only at the Catholic Mass, and not at Presbyterian or Church of Ireland services; I was, however, unable to corroborate whether there was any truth in this, as I decided early on in the fieldwork to adopt an agnostic approach towards religious matters. As I have no religious affiliation myself, I felt it would be both dishonest and irreverent to attend church services as a mere "observer", and more importantly, if I had attended them, I would have had to have affiliated myself with one or other of the three religious communities, which may have unnecessarily restricted the scope of my research.

⁸ Robertson Board schools were established in the eighteenth century by a Colonel Robertson, who had made his fortune in India, throughout the diocese of Raphoe (Carton 1985: 4).

the various autonomous congregational organisations described above, suggest that each denominational ambit reflects a relatively distinctive social arena.¹⁰ A booklet written by the current Rector of the Parish, detailing the history of the Church of Saint Finian and Saint Mark, indicates the extent to which the Protestant congregation, at least, is viewed by their minister as representing a discrete social, as well as religious, group. The first chapter begins thus:

The people are the parish. People make places, and the people of the Church of Ireland parish of Kilmacrennan have created for themselves a pattern of community based on worship and shared responsibility for community life. The worship is the celebration of the shared community life. Baptism, the Holy Communion, Marriage and the Funeral are key elements in the faith journey of the people and the church. Each are celebrated as important reminders of how we as individuals live in community, the local community, the wider universal community and the community of life eternal (Smeaton 1996: 1).

Over the next three pages, the author makes clear exactly which particular community he is referring to, by detailing every single Anglican resident of the parish (a total of ninety nine people), their relationship to each other, and where they live in the area.¹¹ Despite the references to the “local community” and “the wider universal community” in the extract above, it is notable that in the entire booklet of 39 pages, the word “Catholic” is mentioned only seven times, and, as demonstrated by the following passage, the context in which it appears- in various accounts describing the historical development of the Church of Ireland- is very revealing:

⁹ Religious endogamy has been discussed extensively by a number of ethnographers in relation to Northern Ireland. In Leyton's pseudonymous village of Aughnaboy, for example, the author notes that “Protestant must marry Protestant and even the suggestion of deviation from this norm was met with shocked incredulity” (1975: 57). Data from the 1971 census analysed by Lee indicates that only 2% of married couples stated that their's was a mixed marriage, although he does suggest that this figure is probably an underestimate (1985: 78). Similar conclusions concerning the general paucity of inter-marriage are supplied by Barrit and Carter (1972), Harris (1972) and McFarlane (1979). Anecdotal evidence from Donegal collected by this author suggests that the prevalence of religious endogamy in Donegal is as high, if not higher, as that of the population north of the border.

¹⁰ See chapter five, section VI.4.

¹¹ The range of surnames of Protestants in Kilmacrennan exemplifies the level of correspondence between ancestral origin and religious preference displayed by this group in Donegal. Using MacLysaght's guide to the origin of surnames in Ireland, of the 31 families listed in the pamphlet, twelve have surnames deriving from England, ten are of Scottish origin, and only five are native Irish. (Four names are not listed by MacLysaght). At least two of the five families with “native Irish” surnames involve mixed marriages, in which the father is Catholic and the mother Protestant, and the children are being raised in the Church of Ireland (personal research).

At the time of the building of the church [of Saint Finian and Saint Mark], *the Roman Catholic Church was being built in Termon*. The story goes that the Protestant Community removed three stones from the ruins of the old abbey with the heads of three bishops carved upon them. These stones were known as 'The Three Withered Heads'. These were incorporated into the Protestant church. On the following night, before the masonry had time to dry, the stones were removed from their place. The entire territory was searched by the yeomanry but no sight nor sign of the 'Three Withered Heads' were gained. Three copies of the 'Withered Heads' were incorporated into the Protestant church. *It is said that one of the original 'Withered Heads' was used in the building of the Parochial House in Termon* (ibid.: 20-1, emphasis added).

On a day-to-day level, differing religious affiliations are relatively unimportant for the people of Kilmacrennan, however, and friendship networks, particularly among the younger generations, serve to bisect and dilute such distinctions. It is only through specific incidents- in this case, the proposed building of a new hall- that social dichotomies come to be revealed, and even on these occasions, their exact nature are rarely expressed overtly, particularly when "outsiders" are present.

One of the major problems which the development association has faced over the course of planning for the replacement of the old hall is the issue of land. As suggested by the comments made during the meeting, land-ownership in Donegal is byzantine in its complexity. Kilmacrennan lies at the southern edge of what was once the Leitrim estate, a huge area comprising of some 55,000 acres extending from the banks of Lough Swilly to the north of Milford and across to the town of Creeslough in the west.¹² Although the land passed out of the family's ownership upon the death of the 4th. Earl of Leitrim in the early 1930s, a portion of the estate (including Kilmacrennan and the surrounding townlands) is now held in trust by an Englishman based in Surrey called Mr. Skeet, who acquired it during the 1950s. Every householder who owns property in this area of the former estate is invoiced in November each year by Mr. Skeet for a nominal sum of £1 in annual ground-rent, and in theory could be evicted should they fail to pay, something

¹² At the turn of the century, the Earl of Leitrim owned the second largest land holding in Donegal, superseded only by the Marquis of Conyngham's estate of over 120,000 acres located in the west of the county between the south coast and Gweedore (Sacks 1976: 21, n. 13; O'Donnell 1995: 518, 522).

regarded as outrageous by many people I knew in Kilmacrennan and the surrounding area. As someone once put it to me, resignedly: "Colonialism, the British and all that, it will always be with us. It'll never go away." The problem regarding the whereabouts of the deeds to the old community hall- which, as the community's contribution towards the cost of its replacement, is essential to the process of drawing down EU funds- is therefore related to a much wider issue rooted in the continuing legacy of landlordism in county Donegal.

A further important issue to emerge from the meeting concerns the relationship between the bureaucracy and the locale, and specifically the role of the development officer in this process of interaction. Throughout the meeting, agencies were referred to not by their names, but in terms of the people who work for them, usually the principal development officers. Various comments made by Thomas exemplified his position as a link between the group and development agencies, questions from Anne and Seamus usually being met with responses such as "I'll speak to him about this" or "I'll see what I can do here". In a similar way, the handing over of the application form was conducted in an almost ritualised manner, the plastic folder within which it was contained, the action of the wiping of the sleeve across its surface, and the way in which it was received (as though it was some sort of holy chalice), all serving to confirm Thomas' status as a mediator and an advocate for the group. Given that a meeting such as this would usually have been attended by a local councillor (as meetings of the development association had been in the past), it would seem reasonable to assume that the latter's traditional role- that of an information broker- is increasingly being adopted by the employees of development programmes.

The meeting also provides an insight into the differing ideological values held by each of the two development sectors, an issue of fundamental importance in relation to the nature of the interface which separates and divides them. Thomas was concerned throughout the meeting with the regulations and ethos associated with EU development programmes: the requirement to be seen to be involving all sides of the community; the need to advertise and invite tenders for all paid work; the importance of locating the deeds for the hall; ensuring that local councillors provide written confirmation of their promises to grant-aid the project. These various

stipulations can often create enormous difficulties for community development groups, whose activities are usually governed by a *paradigm of informality and exchange*.¹³

Local fund-raising provides a salient example of how this is manifested in practice. As we saw in the case of the famine garden event at Drumkeen, a substantial proportion of the income required by community organisations for their day-to-day activities or for matching EU grants is generated through the sale of raffle tickets. Moreover, as Seamus stated in the meeting, voluntary groups can be confident that they can generate funds from the residents of an area because their members will have invariably bought tickets in the past from those involved in other such groups. Throughout the three days of the Kilmacrennan Festival in July 1997, local children circulated continuously among the crowds on the main street and in the two pubs selling tickets for at least seven separate draws which were to happen during the "Ball" in the community hall on the final night. The prizes themselves were extremely modest, comprising of, in most cases, a bottle of wine or a pack of beer, and in relation to the price of the tickets it was difficult to understand how the children managed to sell any at all. However, the contrary was in fact the case: people would often buy tickets in bulk, perhaps ten at a time, the total cost thus far outstripping the value of any prize that they might receive when the draw came to be made. An explanation for this was provided when the profits from the sale of tickets, amounting to over £1500, came to be distributed by the festival committee, approximately two weeks after the festival. All of the money was allocated among the various voluntary organisations (including the Protestant-led Girl's Brigade), with an additional £400 being put aside to cover the cost of erecting Christmas lights and decorations in the village. In this way, the selling of raffle tickets amounts to a circulating flow of income around the voluntary groups of a given area, and represents a prime example of the importance of exchange in local development activity.

In summary, therefore, the discursive sub-text underpinning a meeting such as this illuminates the significant cultural dichotomy which serves to divide the aims and values of the bureaucracy from those reflected in the locale. The "major role" adopted by the community link worker is as a conduit for

¹³ This observation tends to corroborate the arguments of Salazar (1996); see chapter three, note 60.

the philosophy of EU development planning, focused specifically on the requirement to ensure that the particular model of development practice, surrounding the need to maximise the degree of local representation and ultimately ownership of the overall process, is effectively carried out. However, the reality of social organisation in eastern Donegal is such that it is often impossible to incorporate the range of needs, opinions and aspirations present within one particular locality into the planning stages of development activity. Employees of EU programmes are therefore forced into doing the next best thing, namely constructing devices aimed at maintaining the *appearance* of working towards a system which is geared towards the collective empowerment of local people. And, as we have seen, this task is made all the easier by the discourse of EU development planning, which offers a convenient linguistic veneer with which to disguise the profound difficulties of applying a model of development planning designed with little reference to pre-existing social structures to the task of effectuating social change.

Our second case-study, which comes from a town close to the border, continues with the theme of "interaction" between the EU and the locale, and builds further on some of the issues which have been explored in this chapter so far.

III. Newtoncunningham/Manorcunningham.

Newtoncunningham is similar in size to Kilmacrennan, with a population of approximately 750, and lies on the main N13 road between Letterkenny and Derry, approximately equidistant between the two towns. It is a street village (the main road used to pass through it until a by-pass was constructed in the 1980s), containing a National School, a council estate, three churches, two community halls, a village library, two general stores, three pubs and a small manufacturing unit. During the past two decades, the area has experienced a number of social problems associated with high levels of unemployment, demographic dependency, emigration and crime, together with low levels of educational attainment. The settlement is in the heart of the Laggan, and agricultural work has traditionally been the primary source of employment for the people of the area. In common with St. Johnston, as well as many other towns in the border region of Donegal, one of the effects of this has been to depress the school leaving age, with children often

abandoning formal education at 13 or 14 to work as agricultural labourers in the surrounding area. In more recent times, the Fruit of the Loom plants at Buncrana and Derry have been significant employers of young people, something which has served to compound the problems of early school leaving. By way of illustration, a study conducted in 1995 discovered that of 67 students from Newtoncunningham who enrolled at Letterkenny Vocational School between 1981 and 1987, less than a quarter (15 students) sat the Intermediary Certificate and only 4 went on to take the Leaving Certificate Examination (Tierney and Barret 1995). The same study also found that within the District Electoral Division of Newtoncunningham in 1991, over 70% of the population had medical cards¹⁴, compared to an average 54% in Donegal as a whole and only 46% in the North Western Health Board region generally. In relation to dependency, figures from the 1991 census indicate that 47% of the population are under the age of 25, and 32% under the age of 14.

Despite these social problems (or perhaps because of them), Newtoncunningham is host to a multifarious range of local development and community groups. A total of twenty seven community groups are active in the village, including an Under 5's group, a playgroup, a Foroige branch, a gun club, scouts, cubs and guides troupes, a Marching Band group, various sporting associations (such as the GAA (camogie and football¹⁵), athletics, badminton, soccer and bowling clubs), an Inter-Church Committee and a local Community Development Group.

The origins of the Development Group may be traced back to the efforts made in 1994-5 of the committee of the Marching Band to source some modest funding in order to purchase new uniforms for the children involved in it. The Marching Band is one of the most active of all the local voluntary associations, has won a number of competitions in both Donegal and nationally, and is looked upon with justifiable pride by the residents of Newtoncunningham. Through friends, the committee members had found out about the various EU funding agencies established in Donegal, and set about contacting them all to enquire as to whether they would be able to access money from them for the group. They describe this experience as

¹⁴ Medical cards entitle the holder to free access to health care, and are available to those on the live register, on FAS employment schemes, pensioners and the disabled.

¹⁵ There is no hurling team in the town.

“being pushed round from pillar to post”, and their efforts were ultimately unsuccessful in this regard. (They eventually secured funding from the Development Fund of two local councillors).

Following a number of public meetings organised primarily by the Marching Band group, the Development Group was established in September 1996 as a response to the announcement of the Urban Renewal Scheme by the County Council.¹⁶ Fourteen people were elected to sit on a committee, representing the three religious denominations represented in the town, and a wide variety of occupations. The membership consists of three full-time farmers, a shopkeeper, a former teacher and her husband (a long-distance lorry driver), an unemployed man from the council estate together with his wife and son, the owner of a local garage, the chairperson of the playgroup and three married women. The Development Group was set up essentially in opposition to the Inter-Church Committee, which is run by the clergy and the two councillors who live in the area, and is regarded as being “highly secretive” by members of the former group. In the words of one of the members:

I call them the Klu Klux Klan. My brother-in-law sits on the committee and the only time we have ever argued was when I questioned the way they work. He had a right go at me, and I think I hit a nerve...The thing is, they hoard information, and only look after their own patch. They basically do nothing for Newton.

The members were concerned that the Inter-Church Committee was intending to put themselves forward to the County Council as the community representatives in the Urban Renewal Scheme, and therefore set about “wresting control” of the scheme from them, an endeavour which involved numerous contacts with County Council officials, and ultimately proved successful. In late 1996, they organised a petition among the residents of the area regarding an ongoing problem with water pollution, which was forwarded to the County Engineers Department, and also conducted a survey among other community groups to ascertain their development needs. During this initial start-up period, one of the members of the group approached IRDL in Carndonagh to enquire as to whether they would be eligible for grant assistance from LEADER II. She was “horrified” to discover that IRDL

¹⁶ This scheme is funded under sub-programme 2 of the Operational Programme for Local, Urban and Rural Development: see Appendix Five.

did not view Newtoncunningham as being part of Inishowen, and had no plans to grant-aid any groups south of the “neck” of the peninsula at Burnfoot. She immediately corrected them of this erroneous view. This initial contact led to two members of the committee enrolling on the IRDL’s Diploma Course in Community Development, which they completed in June 1997, and the establishment of a personal relationship between the group and the staff of IRDL.

Manorcunningham is located about five miles to the west of Newtoncunningham, and is a far smaller settlement with a population of approximately 250. The village contains few services or amenities apart from a pub and a small shop, and is beset by similar social problems to that of its larger neighbour. Whilst there are a number of voluntary organisations active in the area, the development group was disbanded in January 1997 following a public meeting which was attended by only a handful of people. It is now run on an ad hoc basis by two middle-aged local women.¹⁷

This case-study is focused upon a meeting held in December 1997 at the community centre in Newtoncunningham, and serves to highlight some of the themes surrounding the relationship between community groups and EU agencies, our primary concern here. The event was organised jointly by the Newtoncunningham and Manorcunningham development groups, and was intended to bring together the members of their respective committees with representatives from various development agencies (namely the Peace and Reconciliation Programme, the Donegal Local Development Company, the Inishowen Partnership Company and Inishowen Rural Development Ltd.) in order to discuss the future development of the two areas. Six staff members from the agencies were present at the meeting, together with three members of the Newtoncunningham group, two from Manorcunningham, and myself.

The meeting was initiated by the chairwoman of the Newtoncunningham group (Maria) who thanked the participants for attending and proceeded to outline some of the problems which the residents of the town currently

¹⁷ As noted in chapter two, both settlements were founded initially as “plantation villages” during the Plantation period. In a review of the development of nucleation in Ireland, Whelen singles out Manorcunningham as a good example of what he describes as a “landlord town”, established in order to integrate previously isolated, Irish-speaking areas into the state system. Interestingly, he notes that “most of these villages failed to survive in the long term and some were spectacular failures” (1988: 40). One might suggest that this view would be vigorously disputed by the present population of the village!

faced. These included the high level of unemployment and the lack of amenities, which has led to a “problem among our youth- getting involved in drugs and all that”, along with the area’s “isolation” from larger towns. Bus services are infrequent and expensive, and few people have access to private transport. Maria also detailed the results of a community survey which the development group had undertaken in the town, which revealed, among other things, that only two people on the council estate were in full-time work. What Newtoncunningham really needed, she explained, was a development worker, “someone to talk over the work we could do”, along with funding to build a larger community hall.

We see all these other places getting funding, Inishowen’s getting loads, but Newton has just been left by the wayside. Now we’re finally in Inishowen, we might get somewhere.

Maria concluded her short speech by stating that “so we have brought you all here to hear how you’re going to help us”, and then invited one of the representatives of the Manorcunningham group, whose name was Eileen, to speak to the gathering.

Eileen again prefaced her presentation with an overview of the social and infrastructural problems of her own area, which, in the case of the latter, she regarded as primarily due to the neglect of the County Council. The pavements on the main street need replacing, a number of houses in the village have been derelict for over five years despite repeated attempts by local people to persuade the council to demolish them, and, since 1974, the residents of the area have apparently suffered from an intermittent and polluted water supply. She then went on to describe, in highly passionate tones, the nature of the relationship between the three religious congregations in Manorcunningham, and the difficulties which this has caused for those active in the development of the area in their attempts to establish a broadly-based organisation. A public meeting was held in September 1996 attended by a number of groups in the area and the development officer of the Peace and Reconciliation Programme (who was also present at this meeting), the aim of which was primarily to create a new association. The development officer informed them that they must elect a committee representing all religious interests in order to draw down funds from the programme, something that was greeted

with pessimism by those present. In January 1997, the AGM of the nascent Development Group was attended by only two people, and the organisation was subsequently disbanded. This was one of the reasons, Eileen explained, why those on the committee had decided to work jointly with the Newtoncunningham group.

The divisions within our community are enormous. The Presbyterians have the Orange Hall for their community, and the Church of Ireland have their own hall as well- fair play to them- but we haven't got anything. Our Marching Band have been All-Ireland champions for the last five years, but they have to practise in the street in the summer and the pub in the winter, and that's only because of the goodwill of the landlord.

Eileen explained about the various groups in the village, and her efforts to enrol her own child in the Church of Ireland-run cubs and scouts group, "but Catholics are barred". Additionally, the separate schooling systems means that children of the different denominations are divided from an early age, with Catholics educated at the National School in Newtoncunningham and Protestants at Drumoe, in the other direction.

We're good neighbours, but we don't really live together, you see. On a Sunday, the Presbyterians and Church of Ireland people come in for an hour and us Catholics go out. On the 12th. of July, the pipe band needed a helicopter escort and 40 guards when they came back into the town, that's what we're facing. What else can you say about Manor? Except that we're very good people!.

Following this highly emotive contribution, the development officer of the Peace and Reconciliation Programme stood up. He had brought a flip-chart with him, upon which he had written the aims of the Programme- "to promote social inclusion and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland"- and summarised the main elements of the sub-measures his organisation was responsible for, detailing the levels of grant-aid which each measure attracted. He also outlined the philosophy of the programme, in terms of promoting "bottom-up" initiatives, and his own role, which, he said, was to enable groups to draw down funding. The development officer

explained that both groups would be entitled to receive up to £3000 funding as a seeding grant in order to carry out an audit of community needs in their areas, and to finance a training scheme for committee members. The latter would include a programme of workshops on reconciliation, social inclusion, managing budgets and personal development, facilitated by a community link worker. He unzipped the briefcase he had brought with him, and removed an Application Pack for the programme. At this point his presentation was interrupted by Eileen, who stated: "Mr. Skinnnader, why do we have to spend £3000 on something that we know already, and we could write down in a 50p book from The Price is Right?"¹⁸, a comment which prompted general amusement around the room. The Development Officer immediately became defensive, as he explained that he was not responsible for designing the programme himself, and "matching aims to needs is what it's all about". Eileen went on,

You've told us about the programme, but what we need is things to happen now. You've got those forms there [pointing to the Application Pack]- the President couldn't even fill them in. We've heard that there's so much money around the place, we can't understand why Manor has been left out. And the money won't be around for ever.

In reply, the development officer stressed the fact that the group needed to establish a formal committee, with a written constitution, and would also require legal status as a company limited by guarantee in the future.

We can't do everything for you- ultimately it is up to yourselves to get into a position where you are able to access the money.

This comment prompted a discussion involving most of the participants in the room, during which Maria and Eileen pressed the agency staff to explain why they were not in a position to access funding immediately. This interchange ended without any definite conclusion, and following a short presentation from the members of staff of the other agencies, which essentially reiterated what had already been said by the Peace and Reconciliation representative, the meeting broke up. The staff members, Maria and myself

¹⁸ "The Price is Right" refers to a shop selling discounted goods in one of the shopping centres in Letterkenny.

went for a drink at a local pub, while Eileen and her colleague waited for a taxi to take them back to Manorcunningham. Although very little had been formally agreed among the participants, the meeting brought into sharp relief the fundamental differences between the perceptions of the development process held by the professional and voluntary sectors in Donegal.

III.1. Discussion.

Perhaps the most significant point to emerge from this meeting is the way in which the role of agency staff was perceived by those from the two voluntary groups. Various comments made by Maria and Eileen indicate that the former were regarded in similar terms as local councillors, in that they were expected to present the local residents with details of “how they were going to help them”. From their perspective, the County Council had proven themselves to be unwilling to furnish resources for their areas in the past (the Newtoncunningham group being established in direct opposition to the politico-religious Inter-Church Committee) and they were therefore turning to the EU as a new source of development aid in the county. Although the Manorcunningham group was very much in an incipient phase, both organisations (in common with a number of those discussed in the previous chapter) had been set up in order to lobby the council for improvements in the social and physical environment of the two areas. There was little understanding among the residents of the reasons why development agencies were unable to provide them with funding immediately: they fully understood the problems of their respective areas, and knew what was required in order to alleviate them. Hence they saw little need to conduct community audits and to participate in training programmes prior to receiving grant-aid.

In a similar way, both voluntary groups viewed the development process applied by the agencies in the similar terms to the way they perceive the workings of the County Council. The comment made by Eileen that “we can’t understand why Manorcunningham *has been left out*” encapsulated this: from this perspective, the geographical distribution of grant-aid is determined by decisions concerning which areas to support made by agency staff themselves, whereas in reality, the opposite is the case. It also represents a fundamental paradox in the bottom-up model. As was noted in chapter four, whilst the EU’s ethos of development prioritises local initiatives and

decision-making, it also relies on community groups adopting a proactive stance in approaching agencies in the first place.¹⁹ And this, in turn, assumes a certain level of prior knowledge in the locale which is often entirely absent. For the first time, community groups throughout Donegal are beginning to experience personalised interaction with those with control over resources, a relationship that was previously subject to political and religious mediation. However, they have experienced difficulties adjusting to what is essentially an entirely new and unfamiliar mode of development. Thus the almost palpable sense of frustration which both Maria and Eileen attempted to convey to the development officers of the various programmes is indicative of the general mismatch between the ethos of the development promoted by the EU and that held by local people. The latter is characterised by a holistic paradigm, in which the reconciliation of divided religious communities is viewed in the same terms as the need for improved public transport or for a venue for marching bands to practise. The EU's approach, on the other hand, is governed by a system of rules and regulations which have been established in a bureaucratic environment which operates at a level far removed from the everyday social reality of the people of eastern Donegal.

Our final case-study, which details an event held in a town seven miles to the west of Letterkenny, illustrates the way the "animation" and "capacity building" aspects of EU development operate on a local level. It serves to highlight the way in which the application of "development labels" can often compound the existing divisions between the bureaucracy and the locale which we have identified in this chapter so far.

IV. Ramelton.

The occasion was a day-long workshop organised by the Ramelton Action Group, a small development association based in a Georgian town of about 1500 inhabitants located on the banks of the Lennon river, approximately six miles from Letterkenny. For many years, development in Ramelton has been dogged by the fact that there have been at least four different development groups competing with one another, so the Action Group was formed in 1995 in order to bring these together under one umbrella, with the ultimate aim of securing EU funds to build a community resource centre. The group

¹⁹ See chapter four, section II.3.

had received a £4500 seeding grant from the Peace and Reconciliation Programme early in 1997, which was used to fund a series of workshops and employ a professional community development facilitator to organise and run them, in line with the “animation” and “capacity-building” aspects of the programme. The theme of the workshop described here was “promoting inclusion”, a title suggested by the facilitator, not the group.

I arrived at the venue for the meeting- an impressive Georgian building in the centre of the town- at the appointed time which had been advertised by the group in a local newspaper, and helped the facilitator to unload his materials from the boot of his car while we waited for the members of the group to assemble. The first people to arrive were a local doctor and his partner, who were followed by a young female journalist from one of the weekly papers based in Letterkenny. During the next twenty minutes a number of other people drifted into the building, and eventually the meeting began. As well as the doctor and his partner, the participants included an elderly single man who lived in a flat on the top floor of the house, two women in late middle age who arrived together, a young woman who was the manager of a training centre for travellers in Letterkenny, and a middle-aged woman who ran a youth club in the town.

The facilitator first outlined the agenda and purpose of the day, explaining that in order to draw down funds from Brussels, the group had to demonstrate to the management board of the programme that it was involving the entire community in its activities. Unfortunately, however, no-one from the other development associations in the town was in attendance, and, as there were only nine people present including myself, it was obvious that the group was having difficulties in meeting this requirement.²⁰ As one of the participants explained to me over lunch, “It’s very difficult, you know, it’s all small-town politics. Everybody is suspicious of what you’re trying to do when you set up something new”.

The meeting then went on to review some of the decisions which had been made at previous gatherings, and the six primary objectives which the group had decided to pursue were written-up on the flip-chart. These were:

²⁰ It is also notable that, apart from myself and the facilitator, all but one of the attendees at the meeting were female.

- (i) To establish an unemployment information and drop-in centre;
- (ii) To set-up an open-day for the young people of the town;
- (iii) To set-up a youth centre, which could be used by existing groups, such as youth clubs;
- (iv) To examine the feasibility of providing a playground or play-areas for children;
- (v) To look at ways of improving child safety;
- (vi) To conduct an architectural survey and identify ways of preserving the heritage of the town.

Much of the discussion in the morning session concerned the proposed centre for the unemployed. Drawing upon the 1991 census figures, the facilitator explained that Ramelton has an unemployment rate of about 13%, and is therefore not regarded as being of high priority by the county council. The town is not mentioned in the council's development plan, which has the professed aim of attracting industry to areas further afield, such as Milford and Rathmullan, and according to the facilitator, the policy for Ramelton is simply to ensure that heavy lorries can pass through the town more easily. This information was greeted with a general air of disgruntlement around the room, everyone agreeing that Ramelton has simply been "abandoned" because of its fine Georgian buildings and that the council's only concern is to develop it into a "fully-fledged heritage town".

The practicalities of running the centre were discussed at length. Most of the participants felt that it should be primarily an information centre, offering details about jobs in the local area and access to services such as a computer, photo-copier and telephone. Someone suggested that it could also be used by local councillors for their clinics, as no one was really sure as to whether any of the five councillors from the Milford ward hosted clinics in Ramelton (although the elderly lady, whose name was Mary, thought that Dr. James McDaid ran a monthly clinic at a local pub in the town). These comments prompted a short discussion surrounding what everyone viewed as the dismissive attitude of councillors towards Ramelton: as Tommy, the elderly gentleman stated,

There's a lot of votes here, probably the largest bloc in the ward, up to 600- and Joachim Loughrey only got in by 600 votes last

time. But they can't seem to agree between each other, and so they just ignore us.

The facilitator reminded the group of its original aims, which were to "be inclusive" and to "act on behalf of all the socially-excluded people in the town". Both were written up onto the flip-chart. Mary then suggested that the centre should have additional functions, and the group then began to consider the merits of planning for a multi-purpose centre which could be used by all sections of the population. The member of the youth club (Catherine) who had been very quiet up to this point, then spoke up. She explained that her own organisation was also planning to develop a multi-purpose centre, and was currently in the process of preparing an application to the Peace and Reconciliation Programme for funding to employ a manager to run a centre to be housed in a former school on the edge of the town. The intention was for this to be used as a youth club, a drop-in centre for the elderly, and a resources centre, and the group was hoping to access additional funding to move into more suitable premises sometime in the future. They had already received a grant of £1000 from the same programme for the purchase of a new pool table. The doctor then stated that he had heard that another organisation based in the town, which had been involved in raising money for the restoration of Ramelton's Town Hall, was planning to apply to the Peace and Reconciliation and LEADER Programmes for funding to build a multi-purpose extension to the premises. It was at this point that the facilitator, who had listened in silence as this information was revealed, left the room in order to prepare some mid-morning tea for the gathering.

The woman from the travellers project (Bronagh) argued that the RAG's centre would be different from these projects, because, as she stated,

It would be a *development* centre. It would be a place where people could have face-to-face contact with an unemployment counsellor, and where they could be put in touch with employers. It would be a work place, not just a service centre.

It was clear that Catherine did not accept this distinction, however, and continuously interrupted the first speaker by saying "but that's what our centre will be doing as well". The issue was never fully resolved, but as

most of the group sided with Bronagh, it was agreed that “development” should be the main focus for the centre. These exchanges were followed by a long discussion concerning the meaning of the term; the facilitator stressed that the meeting should decide exactly which type of development they wished to be involved in, “as this will affect the measure that you apply under”. In Bronagh’s view, development should involve “personal contact at all levels”, but should also include economic activities in the sense of lobbying councillors to bring employment into the town, for example. Under pressure from the facilitator, she reluctantly agreed that the Action Group was primarily a community development group, but stated forcefully that “I would have strong reservations about being categorised like this”.

The participants were much encouraged by the facilitator informing them that the ICTU’s Centre for the Unemployed in Letterkenny, along with the DLDC’s employment committee (of which he is a member) were in the process of developing plans for a Local Employment Service in Donegal, which would involve the appointment of outreach workers.

You’ll be very much at the top of the pile to be an outreach centre.
I’m having a meeting tomorrow with the DLDC and ICTU people,
and I’ll tell them about your plans.

The afternoon session began with a discussion concerning the youth centre. It was agreed that the RAG would put in an application for a grant to employ two youth workers, whose brief would be to source additional funding for suitable premises and to conduct an in-depth survey of the problems faced by the young people of the town. The facilitator distributed a briefing paper which summarised the main issue to emerge from a seminar organised by the DLDC which he had conducted in Letterkenny with 25-30 young people some months previously.²¹ The basic conclusion of the paper surrounded the need for young people to have access to a meeting place in the evenings, as currently they were forced to use local pubs, “something which leads to them drinking alcohol and taking drugs, which have been identified as problem issues by the youth themselves”.²² The proposed centre would have a snack bar, a pool table and computer games and would be staffed by young people themselves. A large abandoned building at the far

²¹ This was the “Youthview” day referred to by one of my informants in chapter four (see page 120).

end of the town (a former bottling plant) was suggested as a suitable location for the centre: as Mary argued, "it should be away from the town, or they'd disturb the residents otherwise, playing music and all that stuff". The facilitator suggested that the group undertake a pilot statistical survey concerning the problems facing the youth of Ramelton, focused particularly on the level of teenage pregnancies, as "this will look good on the application". No-one present at the meeting had any concrete information about this, but everyone seemed confident that such data could be generated. There was general hilarity when someone proposed that the youth centre could be managed by Brookes Advisory Clinics.²³

Following a short exchange of views about the playground, during which it was decided that two should be built to cater for different age groups (as Anita stated, "otherwise the teenagers are going to be sitting around smoking and drinking cans of beer while the wee ones are trying to play"), Bronagh expressed reservations over whether they were addressing their original vision, namely to "meet the needs of all the socially excluded people in Ramelton". In response to this, the facilitator invited the participants to make suggestions regarding the various sectors of the population who could be classified as such. After much hesitancy and debate, during which it became clear to the facilitator and myself that few of those present had even the vaguest understanding of what the term actually meant, the meeting finally came up with five groups- the elderly, the unemployed, women, travellers and men- which were written up on the flip-chart. There was a long debate about whether men should be included, the general consensus being that they should not, but the facilitator insisted on it, because, as he explained, "men have now been recognised as a potentially socially excluded category by both the Department of Social Welfare and the Peace and Reconciliation Programme". Travellers were included despite no-one knowing whether there were actually any members of this group living in the village. However, despite the protestations of the facilitator, it was agreed that youth should be left out of the list, an elderly gentleman summing up the general view when he stated that "in the past, a young person would

²² The facilitator admitted to me later in private that the views expressed in the briefing paper were somewhat variable with what had occurred at the seminar. In fact, the reaction of the participants to the idea of a proposed centre had been decidedly lukewarm, with many stating that they actually enjoyed going to pubs in the evening. I received the distinct impression that relations between the facilitator and the youths had been characterised by a certain degree of antagonism, something that echoes the situation documented by Stephen Gaetz, in his observations of disputes between young unemployed males and professional youth workers in a centre located on the outskirts of Cork City (Gaetz 1995).

²³ This comment refers to a U.K.-based organisation which provides family-planning services.

help you across the street, but they'd rather push you over and rob you these days". Although he admitted to me later that this had never actually happened to him, and that he was extrapolating from the experience of having his car wing-mirror snapped off and thrown into a shop doorway one night during the previous year, the force of his arguments held sway. He was backed up by another participant, who said that whenever she visits friends on the council estate in Ramelton, she always locks her car, as she is "afraid of what the youth might do". Someone else stated that "youths aren't socially-excluded, they always hang about in gangs".²⁴ As the list was being drawn up, an elderly lady who was sitting next to me began to become increasingly frustrated, and eventually expressed, with a rising tone of indignation in her voice, that she was unhappy with the first category on the list, and would not be visiting the centre when it was built. She concluded by stating forcefully that "I'm not socially-excluded, I would have lots of friends in this town". The facilitator valiantly attempted to reassure her that the term "socially excluded" would not actually be part of the name for the development centre, but she remained unconvinced.

A final comment from Bronagh that "we shouldn't be scared of applying for money, you know, these agencies are begging to give it away" concluded the day's proceedings, and the meeting broke-up in good spirits, having decided that the group was "finally getting things done".

IV.1. Discussion.

It will be clear from the above that some of the issues which have been highlighted in our previous case-studies were also in evidence at this particular meeting. What is unusual about Ramelton, in comparison to the other localities that we have examined so far, however, is the sheer number of voluntary development groups represented in the town, and the extent to which they operate autonomously. In addition to the Youth Club and the Action Group, a bewildering array of other organisations exist whose activities are broadly connected with development in some form. These include the Ramelton Development Group, the Town Hall Development Association, the Ramelton Port and Town Company, the Georgian Society, Ramelton Heritage and the Ramelton Community Centre, all but one of which have received funding

²⁴ It is worth noting, in passing, that during the entire proceedings, the disabled were never mentioned at all.

from the Peace and Reconciliation programme in recent years. The Community Centre Committee, for example, who manage an existing building which is used for various events in Ramelton, secured a £3,000 seeding grant from this source in late 1996 to conduct a survey among the residents of Ramelton in order to ascertain their needs regarding a proposed refurbishment of the premises²⁵, which at the time of writing, is now underway. In addition, the Town Hall group received a grant of over £72,000 in November 1997 from the same programme to repair the roof of the building and, according to reports in the press, develop its potential "as a cross-community resource".²⁶ Other groups have also benefited from the Programme: the Georgian Society, the Development Group and Ramelton Heritage secured a grant of over £200,000 in the summer of 1997, as part of a £700,000 scheme to convert a derelict warehouse to house an interpretive centre, craft shops, a genealogy research project and to cater for "tourism services", such as festivals and reunion events, "in order to benefit all sections of the community".²⁷ In sum, there were no less than five groups²⁸ who had either received grants or were preparing applications during 1997 to refurbish existing buildings for the purposes of developing them as what may be broadly termed "community resource centres". Moreover, the fact that the projects of four of these groups were essentially identical, in a town of only 1500 people, may appear to be remarkable, and begs the question: how could the intermediate funding bodies (ADM and CPA, who manage these particular sub-measures of the Peace and Reconciliation Programme), have allowed this to happen?

One can only speculate as to the answer to this, but a probable explanation lies in the need for the Programme to distribute its total funding allocation prior to the end of the current round of Structural Funds in 1999. The pressures on EU grant-aiding bodies to spend their draw-downs from Brussels within the agreed period of time for each funding tranche are difficult to over-estimate, and occupy much of the efforts of the employees working on the ground. Comments by the community link worker in Kilmacrennan, regarding the need to maximise the potential of the hall to enable groups to apply for their own funds, and by Bronagh above, hint at some of these pressures to "get

²⁵ See Appendix Seven.

²⁶ *Donegal People's Press*, 26th. November 1997.

²⁷ *Donegal People's Press*, 30th. July 1997.

²⁸ Namely, the Ramelton Action Group (development centre and youth centre), youth club (multi-purpose centre), Ramelton Community Hall Committee (refurbishment of existing hall), Town Hall Development Association (extension of Town Hall for community centre) and the Heritage, development and Georgian groups (refurbishment of derelict warehouse). (See Appendix Seven).

the money out”.

A more fundamental reason for the over-lapping nature of grant-aid, however, is suggested by the way in which social life in Ramelton, and indeed, eastern Donegal generally, is organised. One man I knew well in the town once explained to me the influence of religious affiliation in fragmenting development activity, although he put it in such convoluted terms that it was difficult, at first, to understand the true meaning of what it was he was trying to say. In stating that “some of the problems derive from similar problems which are present in Northern Ireland, you know...”, the absence of the very word “religion” was, one might suggest, highly significant, and reflects a general tendency on the part of local people in Donegal to use a form of “linguistic wrapping” when discussing such a sensitive issue.²⁹ There are two community centres in Ramelton, the community hall which is undergoing refurbishment- described by my informant as a “‘community’ community centre”- and one attached to the Presbyterian church, which is “used by their own community”. Until the mid-1980s, there were two Presbyterian churches in Ramelton, but the population declined to such an extent that one of them became dilapidated and largely redundant. At this time, the development group approached the minister and asked him whether they could take over the building and convert it for use as an interpretive centre. In the words of my informant,

The minister was not totally against the proposal, but the Presbyterian elders decided that they were not going to allow any other group to use the building, and demolished it instead. That’s what I’m talking about, you see...People see each other all the time, and get on well socially- there’s no problem on that level- but when it comes to working together, that’s different.³⁰

These comments illustrate the particular problems which face EU agencies, and the Peace and Reconciliation programme in particular, in attempting to shoe-horn a pre-conceived model of “community” into local structures which manifestly do not correspond to this ideal. The meeting described above was one workshop of several which were held over the course of a number

²⁹ I am indebted to the work of Joy Hendry in suggesting this idea to me. (See, for example, Hendry 1993).

³⁰ This story was corroborated by a number of other people whom I knew in the town.

of months, but the fact that it was attended by only nine people, all of whom were practising Catholics or from Catholic families, indicates the extent to which notions of “difference” are rooted in the social fabric of the town. The salience of this observation is further heightened when one realises that six of those present were “blow ins”, incomers to Ramelton who hailed variously from Armagh, Galway, Kerry and Dublin. Whilst Bronagh was the only member of the group possessing a professional background in community development, all of them had been active in local voluntary organisations, such as play-groups, in some capacity prior to moving to the town, and hence collectively represent a particular niche in its socio-economic make up.

Furthermore, our case-study also suggests that the discourse associated with EU development programmes may be open to misinterpretation “on the ground”. The term “social exclusion”, for example, while ultimately reflecting the highly laudable aims of EU development practice, is often not fully understood by local people, something which tends to create a linguistic barrier between the development officers of the various agencies and those groups that the EU programmes are designed to help. According to the criteria written-up on the flip-chart, all of those present at the gathering would be classed as bearing the potential for “social exclusion”; however, the fact none of them would ever consider themselves as such reflects the difficulties the EU has had in developing a system whereby the aspirations of those who are genuinely in need are actually communicated to the organisation. Again, this is a product of the organisation’s model of community, which often assumes, albeit tacitly, that community groups are by definition *always* representative of the population of a given locality and of a range of local opinion.³¹ In Ramelton, as in other towns and villages throughout eastern Donegal, this is patently not the case, and is something that requires addressing if the bureaucracy is ever going to free itself from the bonds of the linguistic strait-jacket which it has cocooned itself within.

³¹ See chapter four, *inter alia*.

V. Conclusions.

The purpose of this chapter has been to explore the nature of the process of interaction between professional employees of EU development agencies and local community groups. Specifically, the focus has been upon the contrast between the model of “community” as utilised by the EU and the actual reality of local social organisation in Donegal. The activities of the representatives of the professional development sector- the community link worker in Kilmacrennan, those present at the meeting in Newtoncunningham and the facilitator in Ramelton- surround the “animation” and “capacity building” aspects of EU programmes, designed to ensure that community groups reflect the social diversity of local areas, and that their members are equipped with the skills necessary to apply for and manage EU grant-aid. What I hope to have demonstrated here is the difficulties agency employees are faced with in their attempts to carry out these objectives. They are confronted by the tension between, on the one hand, the need to distribute the total allocations provided by the EU within the time-limit of the programme they are responsible for implementing, and, on the other, the necessity of acting within the ethos and regulations of that programme, in terms of involving local people at all times in planning the development of their own areas. However, divisions are often so deep-seated that, even if officials are aware of them, it is sometimes impossible for EU agencies to involve “all sides of the community” in this process.

It may be asked at this point: is this necessarily a bad thing? If different community groups do not wish to work together, should the EU be pushing them into it? Whilst a definitive answer to this question lies well beyond the scope of this study, I met many people in Donegal who were looking to the EU, and the PRP in particular, to resolve conflicts which existed in their own areas. (The comments made by Eileen in the meeting held in Newtoncunningham serve to illustrate this observation). Moreover, as we saw in the case of voluntary sector representation on the DLDC board, EU structures (and the whole principle of partnership) allow certain individuals to assume positions of authority, in terms of exerting an influence over the distribution of resources, whilst having little or no mandate to speak for their own local areas. Thus in establishing programmes such as the PRP or LDP in which the professed aims are to promote reconciliation and to re-

incorporate socially-excluded groups “back into the community”, and yet relying on a methodology which is based upon a model of the community that often bears little relation to reality, the EU is often guilty of compounding the problems it is seeking to address. Herein resides the paradox of EU development planning, and it lies at the heart of the fragmentation of development activity in County Donegal.

This observation also serves to explain partly why local politicians, despite being effectively marginalised from the mainstream development process in recent years, remain important actors in providing a link (albeit an often imaginary one) between the locale and agents of the state: above all else, they “talk people’s language”, something which the EU and its employees has so far largely failed to do. This is the issue to which we will now turn.

Chapter Seven.

Local Politicians, Development and the EU.

I. Introduction.

In 1977, a young political scientist named Paul Sacks published a book based upon an eighteen month period of doctoral fieldwork that he had conducted during the late 1960s in County Donegal. It is an account of the rise and fall of one of the most powerful and enduring political dynasties in the history of the State; its title is *The Donegal Mafia*.

Although long out of print, this extremely lucidly-written and accessible book has since become famous as one of the first to document in detail the day-to-day operation of an Irish political machine. It was made all the more remarkable by the fact that the author refused to disguise any of the names of his informants or the main players in the politics of Donegal at the time. Specifically, the book dealt with one particular family, the Blaneys, who represented the fulcrum upon which the political structure of the county was balanced through their prominent involvement in the Fianna Fáil party both in Donegal and nationally. Old Neil Blaney had been a T.D. for the Donegal North-East electoral area from 1927 to 1938 and from 1943 to 1948, serving in the Senate in the intervening period, and, upon his death, was succeeded by his son, Neil Blaney, who served in successive Fianna Fáil administrations until he was sacked from the cabinet in 1970 following (unproven) allegations that he was involved in gun-running activities on behalf of the IRA, the latter event heralding, in Sacks' words, "the final collapse" of the machine.

Irish politics, along with Irish society, has changed in many different ways in the twenty years since Sacks' book first appeared. The "peasant farming class" which Fianna Fáil traditionally relied upon for much of their electoral support has largely disappeared, and the concomitant expansion of urbanism has exposed the indigenous population to new sets of cultural values and reference points. Membership of the European Community since 1973 has led to a more open and outward-looking political landscape, and the "parish-pump" image of Irish political activity has lost much of its former salience,

at least at a national level. However, in the preface to the Donegal Mafia, the author makes an interesting comment. He states that "The Donegal Mafia no longer exists in the form I first knew it, but in a quite different sense *it also survives*." (ibid.: x, emphasis added). His prescience here has apparently been borne out by recent events, for in the general election of June 1997, Harry Blaney, the brother of the late Neil Blaney, was elected to the constituency of Donegal North East for the first time, becoming, at sixty nine, the oldest sitting T.D. in the current Oireachtas.

This discussion represents an attempt to compare the contemporary political landscape in Donegal with that which existed in the late 1960s, when Sacks carried out his original fieldwork, in view of Ireland's membership of the European Union and the changes that this has wrought on the structures of governance at local levels in Ireland.¹ The overall aims are twofold. Firstly, to address the question of how the key characteristics of Irish machine politics—defined by Sacks as "organizations characterised by both their high degree of electoral control and their use of specific and material incentives" (ibid.: 9)—and its adjuncts (namely the interrelated phenomena of patronage, brokerage and clientelism), have evolved in the intervening period, and are manifested in the Donegal of the late 1990s. In so doing, the intention is to unravel some of the theoretical issues associated with the nature of modernity, development and social change. Secondly, to describe the structural, processual, and ideological characteristics of the social milieux within which local politicians operate, with a view to presenting an analysis of their role in the development system in Donegal overall, with specific reference to their relationship with those who work in the professional and voluntary sectors described in previous chapters.

In chapter six, it was suggested that the role of the professional development officer is increasingly that of an information broker, and in this way, politicians are becoming marginalised in the development process as their traditional role in providing a link between the state and the locale is usurped by those working for EU development agencies. However, the evidence presented in this chapter will, to a certain extent, provide a corrective to this view.

¹This chapter is based primarily upon extensive interviews conducted during 1997 with five councillors from the Letterkenny CEA, four from the Milford CEA, three from the Donegal CEA, two from the Buncrana CEA and two from the Glenties CEA, along with council officials and the Town Clerk of Letterkenny. Five of the interviews were taped and transcribed; the remainder were written-up immediately afterwards. The length of the interviews ranged from 30 minutes to three hours; the average length was one hour.

Councillors remain important for many local people in Donegal in the late 1990s, and their role in the overall development system cannot be ignored or easily dismissed. In part, this is due to the “gap” which remains between development and state agencies and the locale, compounded by the differential discourses of development current in the two sectors, which serve to disrupt the communication process operating across the divide: the ability of councillors to “talk people’s language” enables them, despite their lack of power, to continue to function as a bridge between the bureaucracy and their electorate.

As has been shown in chapter one, many political anthropologists working in Ireland have stressed the personalised nature of Irish politics, and the way in which politicians operate as patrons, and, more usually, brokers for their constituents in return for electoral support. There is a general consensus across the literature that such a system should not be viewed in any way as a “survival” from a previous era; rather, it should be seen as an integral component of contemporary forms of political life in the country. At the risk of repetition, the data suggest that the loss of local authority reserve functions² has led to a rise in “imaginary” patronage, local politicians now largely concerning themselves with the manipulation of information and their own public image, and that councillors are no longer able to fulfil their previous function as a conduit of resources from the state to the locale. They have therefore become primarily information brokers, their relationship with state agents and T.D.s providing them with a virtual monopoly over the disclosure of the announcement of new grants, county council projects, appointments and other issues of interest to the public, which they are able to utilise for their own electoral advantage. As will be shown below, the councillors of Donegal appear to correspond well to this model.

However, the idea that the basis of the local politician’s electoral support is founded solely upon the operation of a dyadic relationship with the constituent, the latter acting as a passive consumer of brokerage favours and making up his or her mind come election day with reference to this variable only, is, one might suggest, somewhat simplistic and, most importantly, fails to recognise the importance of history in Irish politics. The relationship between councillors and their constituents is often a personal one, perhaps

² For an explanation of this term, see note 16, below.

stretching back over many generations, meaning that people may vote for councillors out of loyalty rather than any expectation of a material reward. As Sacks has pointed out, the power of political machines is based in part “upon appeals to friendship, family, ethnic pride and sometimes ideology to ensure themselves of a majority” (ibid.: 10). One of the many strengths of Sacks’ analysis is his recognition of the importance of what he terms the “political culture” of Donegal to the maintenance of the prevailing political hegemony in the county.

Against a background comparing the political structure of County Donegal during the 1960s with that of the present day, I go on, in the third and fourth sections of the chapter, to discuss the role of local councillors in the political process, the relationship they have with the county executive, and the strategies they utilise to promote their role in the minds of the electorate. Section five is concerned with a description of the views of politicians towards three important issues, namely travellers, nationalism and the EU, and the relationship between politicians and new structures which have been created to facilitate EU development in the county. In the final section, some tentative conclusions are presented concerning the value of the foregoing data for theories of social change and “modernisation” in Ireland.

II. Donegal Politics and the Evolution of the Machine.

The origins of the Donegal Mafia³ are firmly rooted in Ireland’s struggle for independence, and what Sacks describes as a persistent “old peasant political culture, which views government as venal and susceptible to influence, and where primary loyalties are to family and locality” (ibid.: 19). The circumstances behind its development are inextricably linked to the history of one particular family from the north of the county, who have dominated political life in the county for much of the century.

Neil Blaney (the father), who was born in 1898, grew up on a small family farm at Rosnakill, on the Fanad peninsula. He left school at 13 to work on the farm, and was introduced to politics at an early age when, at 15, he sought to supplement his income as an agent for the New Ireland Assurance

³ The term itself has a long history. It appears that it was first applied by a journalist to the group of supporters who travelled with Neil Blaney (the son) when the party was canvassing in other areas of Ireland. It later came to refer to the whole local party machine. (Sacks ibid.: 1, n.1 p.77). The term is still widely used among local people in Donegal, its meaning having been further extended to describe not only members of the Fianna Fáil party, but all local politicians.

Company. It was there that he met a prominent nationalist spokesman, John O'Doherty, a member of the Irish Volunteers who was chosen as Sinn Féin's candidate in Donegal North East at the 1918 general election. Blaney took an active role in promoting O'Doherty's candidature, something which brought him to the attention of senior Sinn Féin officials. Both men became officers in the I.R.A. during the War of Independence (1920-22), and later joined De Valera's anti-treaty forces in the Civil War, when Blaney was captured and narrowly escaped execution at Drumboe, near Stranolar. In 1927, he became a founder member of the new Fianna Fáil party and was elected to Dáil Éireann for the first time.

During his period in office, the party's electoral strength in Donegal North East grew considerably, with a number of new *cumainn* (branches) being established around the constituency. Neil Blaney's political success was not based upon strong organisational skills, however, but rather on his wide range of personal contacts in the county: in Sacks' words,

For him, political life was largely a personal affair- having a drink with a constituent in a pub, chatting with friends at a country fair and so on (*ibid.*: 73).

His sudden death immediately following his re-election to the Dáil at the 1948 general election precipitated a sea-change in the organisation of Donegal politics. His twenty five year-old son Neil was chosen to fight the resulting by-election against a strong Fine Gael candidate, Dr. J.P. McGinley of Letterkenny.⁴ Fianna Fáil's natural majority in the constituency, combined with Neil's skills as a public orator, ensured that the election was won with ease, and thus began one of the most celebrated political careers in the history of the State.

Neil rose quickly through the ranks of the Fianna Fáil hierarchy, gaining a seat in the Cabinet in 1957, at the age of thirty four, as Minister of Posts and Telegraphs. The following year, he ceded his seat on the County Council to his brother Harry (who has held it continuously since then), and in 1959 was given the powerful Local Government portfolio, which he held until being moved to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries in 1966. Unlike his

⁴ J.P. McGinley was the father of the current councillor, Noel.

father, Neil Blaney placed great emphasis on grass-roots organisation, and developed a highly efficient party apparatus within Donegal. He was, perhaps, the archetypal Fianna Fáil politician, who stayed in the family's modest thatched cottage in Rosnakill when he returned to the county from Dublin (now occupied by his brother Harry and his wife), and remained close to his followers in the county throughout his political career. He established *cumainn* in almost every population centre in the constituency, and oversaw all elections to the executive within each, thus ensuring that his own supporters became the dominant voice within the local party. Although he was unable to gain complete control of the county council, his support base diluted by the number of councillors from the CEAs which made up the other constituency in the county (Donegal-Leitrim⁵), the presence of his brother on it also enabled him to gain a strong leverage over council affairs.

Sacks argues that the power the Fianna Fáil party enjoyed in Donegal North East under Neil Blaney's stewardship was based on three distinct factors. Firstly, the level of patronage favours which Neil and his followers were able to distribute were far greater than those of their political rivals (principally, the members of Fine Gael), due to their numerical advantage on the County Council, and more importantly, Neil's prominent position in national Government. Although most groups of council employees, such as road labourers, charge-hands, foremen and gangers, were ostensibly appointed on a neutral, non-partisan basis, many of Sacks informants, both within the council and outside it, insisted that Fianna Fáil "jobbery" was rife in the county.⁶ Furthermore, certain local appointments were the responsibility of Government departments: during Neil Blaney's tenure as Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, for example, the number of party members who gained employment as postmen or sub-postmasters in Donegal increased markedly. Similarly, as Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, he was the sponsor minister for ten different semi-state organisations, and it was alleged that he used this influence to gain political advantage within Donegal by appointing supporters to the board of the powerful Agricultural Credit Corporation, and by granting favourable export quotas for potato farmers in the county sympathetic to Fianna Fáil.⁷ Other appointments under government control included the selection of Peace Commissioners (an essentially honorary

⁵ Now split into the constituencies of Leitrim and Donegal South West.

⁶ With the exception of the appointment of rates inspectors, Sacks was (understandably) unable to generate any substantive evidence of this during his fieldwork. (See section IV.2 below).

position, but which carried material rewards), and posts within the party organisation itself. As well as these "actual" favours, the party became highly adept at manipulating information to generate the impression that the role of the politician as a broker was essential to the allocation of services and resources controlled by government departments, state agencies or the county council executive. Thus the provision of medical cards, council housing, planning permission, old age pensions, council grants, among other ostensibly state-controlled activities, were all widely believed to be subject to political patronage (*ibid.*: 91-3). In some cases, such as in relation to planning decisions, politicians did have some influence; in the case of others, however, patronage was more "imaginary" than real. In this way, the Blaney machine was able to exploit a general assumption that bureaucracies "operate along the lines of influence and intrigue" (*ibid.*: 7), and that a personal advocate was therefore essential when interacting with agents of the state.

Although the allocation of favours was an important- indeed central- element in the success of the Blaney machine, two other factors served further to augment the power of the party. Membership of Fianna Fáil in Donegal North East was based not only upon a transactionalist patron/client tie, but also on relations of loyalty, friendship and kinship, something which applied not only to the Blaneys, but to all local politicians. Sacks' asserts that "the inner core of most Donegal politicians' organisation consists of close kindred and friends" (*ibid.*: 97). In county council elections, the latter could be all-important for a candidate, whose kindred connection may have accounted for up to twenty percent of his vote (*ibid.*). Neil was one of eleven children, and his vast extended family played an extremely important role in the administration and maintenance of the local political apparatus, as well as representing a guaranteed block of electoral support. Additionally, the history of the Fianna Fáil party, and particularly the role of its members in the "troubles", meant that the party was able to appeal to a wide range of personal loyalties and sentiments from which to draw their electoral base. This was something largely denied to Fine Gael politicians, most of whose forefathers had fought with the pro-treaty faction in the Civil War. The fervent nationalistic ideology⁸ of Neil Blaney and his followers was not only

⁷ This information was supplied to Sacks by one Major N.F. Chance, the leader of the National Farmers' Association in Donegal. (*ibid.*: 89-90, n.18). The fact that the individual in question had been involved in a long-running dispute with Neil Blaney at the time of the Sacks' fieldwork perhaps undermines the salience of these allegations (cf. *ibid.*: 53; M. Chance, personal communication 5th. May 1997).

⁸ Sacks describes this as "ultranationalist" (*ibid.*: 201).

a successful strategy electorally, it also effectively suppressed support for other Republican parties in Donegal (such as Sinn Féin and the radical Clann na Poblachta⁹) which otherwise might have posed a threat to Fianna Fáil's power. In sum, then, a semi-monopolistic control over patronage favours (both real and "imaginary"), combined with a wide network of supporters and a nationalist stance gave to the party an electoral edge which ensured its dominance in Donegal North East for over three decades.

Sacks argues that Neil Blaney's role in national government and the power of the Blaney machine in Donegal were highly interdependent variables: the latter provided him with a solid local base from which to further his parliamentary career, whilst the maintenance of Fianna Fáil's hegemony in the county was due in large part to his strong position in the cabinet. According to this perspective, the events of Spring 1970 therefore not only destroyed Blaney's political career nationally, they also led to the collapse of the political machine which he had nurtured so carefully within his home county. In April of that year, Liam Cosgrove, the leader of the opposition, received information that four cabinet ministers (Charles Haughey, Kevin Boyland, Michael O'Móráin and Blaney himself) had been involved in a clandestine plot to import military equipment illegally into Ireland, presumably on behalf of the Provisional I.R.A. The Taoiseach, John Lynch, immediately announced their dismissal from government, and the quartet were each arrested and charged under the Firearms Act. The case against Blaney was dropped before reaching court, on the grounds of insufficient evidence, whilst Charles Haughey was tried, but acquitted. Despite the scandal which surrounded them, both men continued to support the government in the crucial confidence votes which followed, and by 1972, Charles Haughey had been sufficiently forgiven by the party for him to be elected its Vice President. It appears that the demise of the Blaney machine was precipitated not so much by the immediate ramifications of the crisis, but rather from the Taoiseach's decision to promote the other Fianna Fáil T.D. in Donegal North East and Blaney's erstwhile colleague (or "subordinate", as Sacks refers to him), Liam Cunningham, to a cabinet post. Prior to the 1973 general election, the unity which up to then had characterised the Fianna Fáil party in Donegal disintegrated, with a four-way contest developing between candidates from the three CEAs to secure the official nomination to fight the election alongside

⁹ Clann na Poblachta emerged in the 1940s from a split within the I.R.A., and was led by a former I.R.A. commander. It generated notable support in the late 1940s and early 1950s on a national level (Chubb 1992: 93).

Liam Cunningham. One John Harkin secured the nomination, but several days after the election, another candidate, Bernard McGlinchey, was added to the ballot paper by the party's National Executive. Blaney himself decided to fight the election as an independent, and with the Fianna Fáil vote split between three candidates, the same Deputies were returned to the Dáil (Blaney, Cunningham, and the Fine Gael candidate Paddy Harte).

This general election is where Paul Sacks' story of the Donegal Mafia ends, the finality of the narrative encapsulated by the titles of the last two chapters of his book: "The Mafia Collapses" and "Beyond Blaney's Demise". However, his analysis is necessarily incomplete, and with the benefit of hindsight, Sacks may well have revised his description of the dissolution of the Donegal machine. Neil Blaney himself would certainly have disputed the author's interpretation, as he went on to serve continuously as a T.D. until his sudden death in 1992, when he has since been replaced by his brother Harry. Updating Sacks' analysis, in the light of the current political structure of County Donegal, therefore forms one of the primary axes for this discussion.

III. Structures of Political Activity.

Contemporary Local Politics in County Donegal.

Donegal County Council consists of a total of 29 elected members, drawn from the five county electoral areas (CEAs) of Milford, Letterkenny, Buncrana, Glenties and Donegal Town. The dominant party is Fianna Fáil (as it has been for much of this century), with eleven councillors belonging to this bloc, the remainder being divided between Fine Gael (nine), Independent Fianna Fáil¹⁰ (four), Labour, Sinn Féin and Democratic Left (one each), with two independent councillors making up the rest of the membership.¹¹ At the present time, three of the councillors are T.D.s, one is a senator and a number of them also sit on the three urban district councils in the county (Bundoran, Letterkenny and Buncrana). Chairmanship of the council is currently organised on the basis of annual rotation, the result of an agreement struck between members of the three most significant parties (Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Independent Fianna Fáil).

¹⁰ Independent Fianna Fáil was the party founded by Neil and Harry Blaney after they had both resigned from Fianna Fáil in 1973.

¹¹ See Appendix Six.

Whilst it is difficult to treat Donegal's local politicians as a single analytical category, their attitudes and social characteristics varying considerably according to background, party affiliation, gender, personality etc., there are, nevertheless, a number of generalisations that one can make with regards to the "rump" of the council. On an overt level, the members of D.C.C. are predominantly male farmers or businessmen in their late middle age and have been involved in politics for most of their lives, many of them having been members of the council for two decades or more. Furthermore, they are usually from political families, their fathers, grandfathers or even great-grandfathers also having held political office in many cases, and have therefore been immersed, from an early age, in the machinations of political life in the County. There are only four female members of the council, and all have gained their seats through co-option following the death of their husbands or fathers.¹² It is indeed possible to talk of a distinctive political culture in Donegal, membership of which is rigorously-controlled and highly exclusive, to the extent that the electoral process appears to be a largely incidental factor in determining the make-up of the council.¹³ This is testified by the fact that, of the 29 members of D.C.C, 9 became members through co-option, 16 were first elected before 1979, and, of those, a further 12 were elected before 1968. Most remarkably, four members have been sitting on the council for over forty years. Only four councillors have lost their seats in the four local elections held since 1974, changes in the make-up of the council during the intervening period occurring largely through deaths, resignations and co-option, something which serves to illustrate the power of incumbent councillors over those aspiring to hold political office.¹⁴

This culture, with its own particular history and traditions, rules of behaviour,

¹² This pattern of female representation on Donegal County Council reflects the "family seat" system in the Dáil, which was the traditional route for women entering the Oireachtas. In the words of Chubb:

In the past, to inherit a 'family seat' was almost without exception the only way a woman could become a parliamentary representative. Of the twelve women who sat in the Dáil between 1922 and 1948, three were widows and three sisters of prominent leaders of the independence movement, and five others were widows of former Deputies. Thirty years later the position had not changed: of the six women deputies elected in 1977, only one was not in this category. (1992: 206).

The level of female participation in Donegal County Council corresponds with the situation nationally: only 14% of councillors were women in 1996 (Government of Ireland 1996: 23).

¹³ Bax demonstrates that in order to become a politician in Ireland, it is necessary to "be accepted" by the populace, ideally by having been born in the constituency or having family connections with it. Also, given the degree of financial security and time that politicians require, he argues that the actual range of people who can feasibly become politicians is extremely limited (1976: 52-60).

¹⁴ It should be stressed that Irish local elections always attract a high turnout in comparison to other European countries (upwards of 55% nationally, with figures of 75%-80% not uncommon in Donegal), along with a large number of candidates for each seat. (Roche 1982: 97-98; Brennan and Murphy 1986: 70-77; Chubb 1992: 78-83). In the case of the 1985 election, for example, the Milford, Letterkenny and Buncrana CEAs attracted a total of 37 candidates for the 17 seats being contested. Furthermore, no candidate has been elected unopposed in any election in Donegal since 1957 (*Irish Times*, 24th. June 1985).

ideological tenets, criteria for admission, symbols of status, and, importantly, discernible discourse, has evolved over the course of this century, and is ultimately rooted in the Republican ideals which emerged during the latter period of British rule in Ireland. It has also been sustained through the enduring power of the Fianna Fáil party in Donegal, the political machine which Sacks' study was focused upon.

Of course, these are generalisations, and not all members of the Council would correspond to the portrayal depicted here. The Council is divided by party affiliations, includes a number of independent councillors, and does not act as a uniform body, with meetings often punctuated by heated disagreements between members. The operation of political parties in Donegal is examined in detail below, in order to provide a contextual backdrop to the role of individual council members in the development process.

III.1. The Council Meeting and Party Politics.

The full council meeting is held once a month in the council chambers in Lifford, a small town adjacent to the border in the east of the county; there are also a variety of sub-committees to which councillors are elected, dealing with specific issues, which meet on a less regular basis.¹⁵ Council meetings usually follow a set pattern, one that has existed virtually unchanged since the foundation of the County Management System in 1929, which divided the powers of local government between the County Manager and the elected representatives.¹⁶ Each councillor is entitled to ask three questions of the County Manager, and can also put forward a number of motions, on any particular issue which they feel is relevant to the county. Sacks provides a

¹⁵ These include the Agricultural, Cultural, Fisheries, Sheep-Dipping, Foyle Car-Ferry and Letterkenny Airport committees.

¹⁶ These are known as "executive" and "reserve" functions respectively. Chubb describes the differences between them in the following terms:

Elected members are to concern themselves with two main types of business: firstly, general policy matters such as the adoption of the budget, the striking of the rate, borrowing, the disposal of council property, the making of local laws (called "bylaws") and important planning decisions; and secondly, what might be called representational matters, such as the control of elections, the selection of persons to be members of other bodies, the appointment of committees and the salary of the mayor (in towns and cities). All the functions and duties of the council that are not specified as reserved functions are executive or managerial functions. These managerial functions explicitly include the appointment and control of staff, in so far as these matters are not centrally controlled, and the making of contracts, especially the letting of houses... Thus functions that involved decisions open to personal and political influence and that increasingly, as the welfare state developed, required a mass of detailed administration and decisions unsuited to committee procedures were removed from the elected representatives and committee decision" (1992: 276).

As the author notes subsequently, however, this sharp legalistic division between managerial and elective functions has been eroded through the years, as councillors and managers have become increasingly involved in each other's administrative ambits (ibid.: 277-8).

number of examples of the types of motions put forward by councillors at one particular meeting in 1968:

Motion: (Clr J.J. Reid, Fine Gael)

"That this council build an S.I. [Specific Instance] House for Charles Porter, Magherabuoy, Liscooly".

Motion: (Clr F. Cunningham, Fine Gael)

"That this council install a new range in Cottage no. 37 Coulin Road, Killybegs without increasing the weekly rent".

Motion: (Clr A. Diver, Fianna Fáil)

"That this council revoke planning permission granted to H. Thompson to ensure that no building operations be carried out on the shorefront between Carrigarory Pier and Moville, where in this case planning permission was refused by County Council, but decision overruled by minister" (Sacks, op. cit.: 51-2).

By way of comparison, the following are a sample of some of the motions put forward by councillors in 1991:

Motion: (Clrs H. Blaney, E. Fullerton and N. McGinley)

"That in accordance with Section 4 of the City and County Management (Amendment) Act 1955, we the members of D.C.C. hereby direct the County Manager to decide to give planning permission to Francis Sweeny, The Ross, Rosnakill, to erect a chalet and septic tank in accordance with the plans submitted at Carland Upper, Kerrykeel".¹⁷

Motion: (Clr D. McGonagle)

"That the next council worker to be employed in the Carndonagh Engineers Area be from Clonmany".¹⁸

Motion: (Clr S. Gill)

"That a public light be provided on a pole near to the homes of the Callaghan families at Ballylosky, Newtoncunningham".¹⁹

These examples suggest that remarkably little has altered in the role of councillors as the "countryman's personal emissary to an anonymous state" (Sacks: 51) in the intervening twenty-two years; they also indicate the salience

¹⁷ Donegal County Council Minutes of Meetings 28th. January 1991.

¹⁸ Donegal County Council Minutes of Meetings 25th March 1991.

¹⁹ Donegal County Council Minutes of Meetings 2nd. April 1991.

of geography for council members. Voting in the council, which occurs several times at every session, tends not to be organised along party lines. Rather, councillors will vote according to the particular area they represent, with the six (or more) councillors from each CEA voting as a bloc on issues of importance to their own particular constituency. With regards to planning applications, for example, which occupy the bulk of council business, a member can normally rely on the full support of the council, knowing that they will be expected to support their colleagues when the situation is reversed. In this way, Donegal mirrors the system of local politics pertaining throughout Ireland: as Roche has pointed out,

Irish councillors tend to be...non-ideological and particularist, not so much legislators or policy-makers as consumer representatives concerned with complaints, grievances and pleas to mediate between constituents and a somewhat bureaucratic management (1982: 98).

In the words of one councillor, the nature of party affiliation as it exists in Donegal at the present time is "a bit of a joke". This is not to say, however, that party affiliation is not significant, and on certain occasions, such as the election of the chairman, or at "special" meetings, which may be held to consider specific issues of importance, to welcome visiting dignitaries or for the purpose of inaugurating a new County Manager, party affiliation often comes to the fore. However, the significance of party politics in the council chamber is blunted through the use of a number of manipulative strategies which operate in harness to ensure that the traditional power base of the council remains intact. As mentioned above, the chairmanship of the council rotates annually between Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Independent Fianna Fáil, the upshot of which is that the electoral procedure has been largely meaningless for a number of years.²⁰ To take the 1993 vote as an example:

Clr Paddy Kelly [Independent Fianna Fáil] was proposed by Clr H. Blaney [Independent Fianna Fáil] and seconded by Clr N. McGinley [Fine Gael]. Clr S. Rodgers was proposed by Clr S. Maloney and seconded by Clr F. Coll. Following a short heated discussion in relation to the "pact" that existed between the parties,

²⁰ The Chair of the council is elected each year by its members.

the Chairman stated that as there were no further nominations he was asking the County Secretary to call a vote.

Result: Clr Paddy Kelly. For: Clrs Blaney, Boyle, Brennan, Conaghan, Doohan, Ferry, Gallagher, Gill, Harte, Kelly, Kennedy, Loughrey, McBreaty, McEniff, McGinley, McGlinchey, McGonagle, McGuinness, O'Kelly and Reid. Clr S. Rodgers. For: Clrs Coll, Devenny, Maloney and Rodgers. Clr Paddy Kelly elected, by 20 votes to 4.²¹

In July 1997, the local media devoted widespread coverage to the election of Fine Gael Councillor Maureen Doohan as chairperson, the first female ever to have held the post in Donegal since the foundation of the State. The occasion was portrayed as an "historic achievement", which heralded, in the words of one councillor, Donegal's "coming of age", and all newspapers carried extensive biographical portraits on the new chairperson, characterising her rise in status as a personal triumph. All reports emphasised the fact that she was elected with the full support of the other parties.²² Thus the only Labour member on the council, Sean Maloney, who would normally oppose the candidature of a member of one of the three parties involved in the pact, endorsed the appointment of Clr Doohan, claiming (somewhat ironically, perhaps) that it gave a "sense of gender balance" to the council.²³ However, given that it was the turn of Fine Gael to hold the chairmanship in 1997, and that the other eight councillors from the party had all held the position in previous years, the event was perhaps not as significant as suggested by local newspaper reports. Moreover, had a vote been taken, the only opposition would have come from the usual quartet of independents²⁴, ensuring that Fine Gael took over the chair in any case. Indeed, at the same meeting, the post of vice-chair was decided, with independent Councillor Jim Devenny losing out to Clr Seamus Gill of Fine Gael by 25 votes to 4, in the normal manner.²⁵

This system of a rotating chair has been heavily criticised by those members

²¹ Donegal County Council Minutes of Meetings 12th. June 1993.

²² *Donegal People's Press* 30th. July 1997.

²³ *Donegal Democrat* 31st. July 1997.

²⁴ "Independent" in this sense refers to the fact that these councillors do not belong to the three main political parties: two of them are members of Labour and Democratic Left, both national parties. (The only Sinn Féin member of the council, Jim Ferry, invariably votes with the majority faction).

²⁵ *Derry People and Donegal News* 25th. July 1997.

of the council who do not belong to the three main parties, one councillor describing the way politics in Donegal operates at the present time as akin to a “cosy cartel”²⁶, a claim vigorously disputed by the other members, at least in public. A further source of discontent for independent members is the way in which council business is controlled. The locus of power in the council revolves around the prominent chairman of Fianna Fáil in Donegal North East, Bernard McGlinchey, a former senator and proprietor of the “Golden Grill” night-club on the Port Road in Letterkenny, whom Sacks describes as “the key political figure in the Letterkenny CEA” (1976: 166). By common consent, McGlinchey’s reputation in this respect has not lessened in the intervening period, and he remains in control of council affairs not only through the unwavering loyalty of his fellow party members, but also through his close association with Harry Blaney. One councillor put it these terms:

Bernard basically runs the politics in this county, Fine Gael as well as Fianna Fáil. Decisions are rarely made without Bernard’s consent, he stamps them. The new chairmanship is coming up [referring to the 1997 election], and Bernard will be deciding on it.²⁷

Another argued that McGlinchey influences the way in which councillors vote because of his reputed “pull” with the county executive.

Members will often vote against their better judgements, because they are looking over their shoulders, because they are worried about whether they will get a particular appointment that is coming up, or whatever.²⁸

The origins of McGlinchey’s power are difficult to fathom exactly, but are almost certainly associated with his political longevity (he was a prominent figure during the salad days of the Blaney machine), along with his strong links to the Fianna Fáil party nationally, founded upon his close friendship with the former Taoiseach Charles Haughey. One councillor speculated that

²⁶ *Donegal Democrat* 4th. Dec. 1997.

²⁷ This comment further illustrates the circumstances behind Maureen Doohan’s election.

²⁸ Unfortunately, I was unable to discover what this particular councillor meant by “getting a particular appointment”. At the time (the interview took place early in my fieldwork period), I assumed he was referring to councillors themselves, in terms of membership of committees, places on overseas delegations, representation on external bodies etc. However, on reflection, I tend to think that he may have been referring to securing public appointments on behalf of constituents.

he would be damaged by the revelations concerning Haughey's business dealings which emerged during 1997, as "he's always modelled himself on old Charlie. He has a house on a Pacific island and a yacht in the same way that Charlie has".²⁹

Despite the control which Bernard McGlinchey exerts over his fellow members, on certain occasions when party affiliation is raised in the council chamber, political debate can adopt a rather adversarial form. By way of illustration, the following is an extract from the minutes of a special meeting of the council held on 27th. April 1992 to welcome a new County Manager:

In welcoming Mr. Dooley [new C.M.], the Chairman stated that he was pleased that the council now had a full management team....The Chairman then ruled that he was allowing one member from the Fianna Fáil Party, one member from the Fine Gael party, and one member from "others" to welcome Mr. Dooley. Clr Gallagher, on behalf on the Fine Gael Party, Clr McGowan on behalf of Fianna Fáil and Clr Devenny on behalf of "others" respectfully welcomed Mr. Dooley and also paid tribute to Mr. Moloney [outgoing C.M.]. Clr Maloney stated that he wished to welcome the C.M. on behalf of the Labour party and despite being asked to resume his seat by the Chair, he persisted to address the meeting and the Chairman adjourned the meeting for two minutes at this point. Clr Coll also stated that he wished to welcome Mr. Dooley to the County.

/..../

At this point Clr Blaney requested to speak on behalf of the Independent Fianna Fáil Party. The Chairman stated that he had made a ruling that he was only allowing one member from Fianna Fáil, one from Fine Gael and one from "others" to welcome Mr. Dooley and that Clr O'Donnell had accepted this ruling on behalf

²⁹ The Haughey scandal was a major topic of conversation among the people I knew in Donegal over the weeks when it was being reported by the national media, and the way in which local people reacted to each new revelation revealed much about how the political system is perceived. The usual attitude was one of amusement, combined with a general air of acceptance that that is the way politics works in Ireland, and there is little that can be done to change things; few people I talked to were particularly surprised. As one elderly farmer said to me: "that Charlie Haughey- now there's a boy, eh? All that money, and he didn't even know where he was getting it from. [Laughs]." A housewife reflected this view: "Charlie's been a bit of a naughty old lad hasn't he? We'll all rise and fall with Charlie, that's what we used to say. Well, he's certainly fallen now- he'll have to give up all his islands and that. He won't know what to do with himself." I was witness to one amusing illustration of this attitude during a children's fancy dress parade held as part of a summer gala on a housing estate in Letterkenny. One child, who was no more than about ten years old, sported a large sign attached to the front of his shirt, upon which was pinned various "Monopoly money" notes and bore the legend "C.J. Haughey- 'Loadsá Money, Loss of Memory'. Thanks Big Fella." It may be noted that he received second prize in the competition.

of Independent Fianna Fáil. A heated debate then ensued, with Clr Blaney reiterating that he wished to welcome Mr. Dooley on behalf of the Independent Fianna Fáil Party, and that he would not allow the meeting to continue until he had done so. The chairman stated that he could not go back on his ruling and adjourned the meeting on a number of occasions during the debate. After a period the chairman stated that if it was the unanimous decision of the council to allow Clr Blaney plus Clr Maloney to speak then he would do so and the members were in full agreement. Clr Maloney, Clr Blaney and Clr Ferry [Sinn Féin] then proceeded to welcome Mr. Dooley to the council and also paid tribute to Mr. Moloney.

/.../

The chairman then stated that he wished to apologise to any member if he had offended them during the heat of the debate which had proceeded and he then presented Mr. Dooley with his official Donegal County Council tie.³⁰

Perhaps the most graphic demonstration of the general solidarity of Donegal politicians, and their somewhat tenuous relationship with their respective national bodies occurred during the Presidential Election campaign in 1997. Dana Scallon, a former Eurovision song-contest winner for Ireland who now resides in North America, declared her candidature for highest office in the State in the absence of any formal backing from a political party, a rare, but not unprecedented, step.³¹ In line with Article 12.4.2 of the Constitution, she set about securing the endorsement of four county councils, and, having family connections in Derry, chose Donegal as the most likely to approve her nomination in the first instance. Three weeks prior to the poll, a special meeting was convened in order to consider her request for support. Following a brief address to the council, in which Mrs. Scallon stressed her local ancestry, the members voted by 12 votes to 3 in favour of her candidacy, thus defying instructions given by each of three main national parties not to support anyone but their official candidates.³² Whilst the strong anti-abortionist position adopted by Mrs. Scallon was undoubtedly a factor in the way many councillors voted³³, the opportunity for councillors to exercise what was,

³⁰ Donegal County Council Minutes of Meetings 5th. March 1992.

³¹ In the 1966 Presidential election, Eoin O'Mahony attempted to secure the support of four councils, but failed to do so (Roche 1982: 3-4).

³² *Tirconnail Tribune* 18th. July 1997; *Donegal Democrat* 18th. July 1997.

³³ Many Donegal councillors belong to the "Pro-Life" movement.

after all, their constitutional right, and carry out a decision independently from the diktat of the centre, was also crucial, serving to over-ride any lingering sense of loyalty felt towards their respective national parties.

In summary, this brief overview of the organisation of Donegal County Council suggests that local politics is governed by a strong sense of independence and historical continuity, and operates as a self-perpetuating system in which change only occurs in a very gradual manner. The importance of kinship ties ensures the seamless transmission of the basic elements of the dominant political culture across generations, such that the actual democratic election of county councillors is of only marginal importance in determining the political make-up of the council.³⁴ Party affiliation remains relatively insignificant in determining the way decisions are made, personal loyalties and geographical factors together determining the outcome of most issues.

Having dealt, albeit briefly, with the *structure* of politics in Donegal, it is now necessary to turn to the *processes* which underlie political activity, especially with respect to development in the county. The following section will therefore be concerned with an examination of, firstly, the way in which development is perceived by Donegal councillors, and secondly, an assessment of the extent of their utility for local people.

IV. Processes of Political Activity. The Functions of County Councillors.

IV.1. Development and Local Politicians.

The Donegal politician's view of development varies little to what, one suspects, holds true of politicians the world over. Development should be tangible, quantifiable and lead to positive improvements in the well-being of the population. From this perspective, it appears to be a relatively unproblematic concept. For most councillors, development is essentially a matter of "trickle-down" economics, and is defined in specific terms with reference to issues such as the number of jobs being created in the county, the building of new roads and housing, the provision of new shopping centres, etc. This rather narrow understanding of the meaning of the word is

³⁴ The issue of local democracy in Ireland has been discussed at length by Barrington (1991), who goes as far as to suggest that there is no local democracy:

Ireland is a country where democracy has deep roots, but the democracy is *parliamentary*, not local (1991: 141, emphasis in original).

often a source of division between politicians and the executive, played out in the conflict between the interests of individuals for whom the local councillor is usually acting in the council chamber, and the statutory duty of planning officers in ensuring that the physical development of the county is pursued in a balanced and cohesive fashion. This problem is illustrated in a report submitted by the County Manager to the members in 1994:

Members have raised an issue in relation to the attitude of planning officials to developers and have characterised this as anti-development. The role of planning officers is a positive one and is pro-development...The activities of the planning staff have as their objective the more orderly development of the county and the preservation of its enormous range of natural amenities and beauty together with betterment of the people of the county at large whilst at the same time having regard to the interests of the wider community.³⁵

The attitude of politicians towards development activity is similarly opposed to the views of the professional and community development sectors in Donegal. One particular councillor, for example, when questioned about the benefits of EU development funding, cited the fact that the county now has more hotels with swimming pools than Kerry for the first time. "That just shows you how things have changed, and it's all EU money that's done it". Given that this particular politician is a director of Bord Fáilte nationally and a prominent hotel owner, his opinions are probably unsurprising, but this nevertheless illustrates a significant difference between politicians and many of those involved in community groups in terms of their relative attitudes towards the EU. To spend EU funds on hotels is regarded as something verging on the corrupt by many professional and voluntary development activists, and certainly a scandalous waste of precious resources, and yet councillors- and here they are reflecting the traditional view of the State- regard it as a perfectly acceptable, and indeed necessary means of developing one of the county's most important industries.

These attitudinal differences reflect a more fundamental dichotomy between

³⁵ Donegal County Council Minutes of Meetings, Report on Planning and Development 25th July 1994: 6-7. In the same report, the County Manager advocated

involvement on a more active basis of the members in formulating policies and guidelines for planning development and control. This should reduce the reliance on section 4 motions [see below, pp. 283-285] to have their policies implemented (ibid.: 8)

politicians and those involved in the other developmental arenas with regards to the way in which the process should be executed. Developmental change, for local politicians, is conceptualised as the product of a series of multiple negotiations between those who exert control over spending and resources, and the authentic representatives of local people, the politicians themselves. The indigenous population of Donegal, in this model, is therefore left entirely out of the equation: politicians, for all intents and purposes, *are* the local community. Their role, which is well understood by both sides, surrounds the need to secure the “best deal” for the county (in the case of T.D.s) or the particular electoral area which they represent (in the case of councillors) through their personal contacts with agents of the State. These dyadic relationships are founded upon mutual need and characterised by a two-way exchange of goods and, far more usually, information. The model therefore envisages- in theory- a simple flow of resources from the State to the locale through a hierarchical network of patronage and brokerage, so that, just as the loyalty of a particular T.D. to the national party or the government is founded in part on the level of resources which they are able to secure for their own constituents, the efficiency of a county-council member is measured by the favours he or she is able to provide for local people in return for support on election day. It should be stressed that, from the politician’s point-of-view, there is nothing particularly “underhand” about the operation of this system; the primary function of a T.D. or councillor is to represent the interests of the people who elect them, and the fact that this is achieved largely through the exploitation of an array of personal relationships is viewed more as a result of the centralised and secretive nature of Irish bureaucratic practice, rather than because of any deliberate aim of politicians to subvert its apparent neutrality and efficiency. Along with social scientists, politicians recognise that bureaucracies are primarily social phenomena, and should be understood and utilised as such.

The local interpretation of the 1997 general election results in Donegal may serve as an illustration of how this system operates on a national level. A widespread view in the county is that Donegal has “lost out” on its “fair share” of resources in the past because the county’s T.D.s have not been involved in government at ministerial level for a number of years. Indeed, this fact, along with the geographical peripherality of the county and the violence across the border, is one of the most common explanations offered

by local people when accounting for Donegal's impoverishment. Generally speaking, development is regarded as something governed principally by the will of politicians; from this perspective, since Donegal is largely insignificant in the context of national politics, elections being won and lost in Dublin, it has understandably been ignored by central government for many years. Consequently, the return of a Fianna Fáil-led coalition government in 1997, and the subsequent appointment of one of the two Fianna Fáil T.D.s for Donegal North East (Dr. James McDaid) to a cabinet post was portrayed by the local media largely in terms of the benefits which would undoubtedly accrue to the county as a result of this re-established voice in the heart of government.³⁶ The concomitant election of Harry Blaney as an independent T.D. for the same constituency was greeted with a similar level of expectation, particularly when it became clear in the days following the poll that he, along with a number of other independent T.D.s, would hold the balance of power in the new Dáil. Given that his father and his brother had both been prominent Fianna Fáil frontbenchers, the loyalty of Blaney to the new government was never really in question; but what was in question, in Donegal, was whether he would use this opportunity to secure a greater level of spending commitments for the county. Since this time, the Tirconnail Tribune, a fortnightly newspaper based, it may be noted, in Milford- for generations the source of the family's political power- has started publishing a column entitled "Blaney News", in which any new grants or important developments earmarked for the area are announced. The same paper, reporting several months after the election, stated that:

Deputy Blaney has refused to reveal the details of the package but sources close to Independent Fianna Fáil have said that Donegal is to gain substantially from a funding package for the general infrastructure, including roads, housing, water and sewerage services over the next three years. Deputy Blaney is said to be unhappy with the media coverage he has received for some aspects of his funding package and it is believed that he is now to seek assurances from the relevant sources that Government announcements pertaining to grant allocations that he has agreed will be fully accredited to him.³⁷

³⁶ Sacks describes this strategy as the allocation of "pork barrel" patronage (1976: 88).

As alluded to earlier, local politicians are obviously unable to exert the same level of political leverage as their counterparts in the Dáil because the County Manager system ensures that the distribution of resources is largely controlled by county council officials or local civil servants, not councillors. This is a source of great resentment to all politicians, not only in Donegal but throughout the country, and motions are regularly circulated between county councils calling for the instigation of a process of local government reform. The numerous green and white papers which have been issued by successive governments in the past but have not been acted upon have instilled a certain fatalism on the part of councillors, who view local government in Ireland as akin to a "talking shop". The councillors whom I spoke to were either not aware of the current process of reform, initiated by the Rainbow Coalition in December 1996, or were extremely sceptical that any substantial changes would result from it.³⁸

However, there are various areas where councillors do retain some power, and in the case of other areas, where their power has been lost, they employ various methods in order to manipulate actively the public's perception of their role.

IV.2. Local Politicians and their Constituents: Patronage in Action?

Councillors have a number of duties outside the council chamber, many of them providing a system of regular "clinics" for their constituents, for example, which represent one of the principal ways in which local people are able to meet their representatives face-to-face and request help from them. These are usually held in pubs or community halls at specified times advertised beforehand in the local press. Councillors can also be relied upon to attend the meetings of voluntary groups and other associations across their area, and are expected to be present at various public events, ranging from the

³⁷ *Tirconnail Tribune*, 4th. November 1997. As a further example, the following item appeared in the same paper on the 7th. August 1997, under the headline *Blaney Welcomes £293,000 Roads Allocation*:

Deputy Harry Blaney has announced a supplementary roads allocation of £293,000 for Donegal County Council. Deputy Blaney said last night that he was pleased to announce that he had been informed that an additional £5m for Class 3 roads had been allocated by Environment Minister Noel Dempsey...This allocation is part of the deal negotiated by Deputy Blaney for Donegal North East in recognition of his support for Bertie Ahern.

³⁸ To an extent, the attitude of councillors in this respect is understandable. As Coyle makes clear,

Ireland is almost unique among its European neighbours in not having implemented any major reform of local government in the post-war years...The past 25 years saw the publication of numerous reports on local government by successive governments, political parties, academic institutions and social/ interest groups, none of which were implemented (1996: 282).

However, the current process of reform seems to hail a reversal of this trend. (This issue will be discussed further in chapter eight).

inauguration of new buildings, school prize-giving ceremonies, launches of new projects or enterprises, or the opening of festivals. Local village organisations are extremely careful to invite as many councillors from their area as possible to public occasions, in the knowledge that, should any one of them be overlooked, the community may well miss out in the distribution of grants or other favours in the future. It is, in fact, extremely rare for local politicians not to be present at a festival or project launch, and the success- or otherwise- of a public occasion is measured in part by the number and relative status of those public representatives who are in attendance: newspapers each week devote many pages to photographs of politicians pictured with the organising committees of such events.³⁹ Community organisations treat politicians very much as dignitaries, and, in this respect, their status in the public arena is somewhat at odds with the limited role which they have inside the council chamber.

At the opening of the famine garden in Drumkeen, for example⁴⁰, the local politicians who had agreed to attend were first invited by the committee of the development association to a wine reception held in a sports hall away from the location for the main event in the centre of the village. This was followed by a procession (delayed because of the late arrival of one of the councillors⁴¹) which proceeded up the hill between the two venues. The politicians took their seats on the lorry trailer, which had been decorated with flags and banners made by local people and the floor covered by a red carpet. The elevated position of the councillors gave them the appearance of royal personages, socially as well as physically removed from those around them, an impression that was further heightened by their besuited attire, which contrasted sharply with the traditional nineteenth-century dress worn by many of local people for the occasion. The master of ceremonies referred to them throughout his speech as "our esteemed guests", and, following the formal blessing of the garden, they were immediately escorted to a classroom in a local school for a meal of home-made sandwiches and cakes provided by the women of the village, who waited attentively upon them as they ate. It is worth noting that throughout the event, none of the councillors were

³⁹ Dr. James McDaid's photograph was featured on a total of 67 different occasions by two weekly newspapers (the *Donegal Democrat* and the *Donegal People's Press*) at various functions held around the county during 1997.

⁴⁰ See chapter five, section III.

⁴¹ It is worth highlighting the fact that the politician referred to here was J.J. Reid, the councillor whom the group had, by then, contacted in relation to the provision of a new water main in Drumkeen. As an advocate for the group, it would have been unthinkable to have begun the procession without him.

ever called upon to actually *do* anything, by way of making speeches, etc.; their very presence was enough.

The deferential status which is accorded to local politicians by community groups, whilst obviously flattering, also places further obligations upon them to carry out the demands of their constituents when the latter ask them for help. One particular village festival I attended was opened by Dr. Jim McDaid, who had been recently returned as one of the two Fianna Fáil T.D.s for Donegal North East in the general election, and who also came from the area. In his speech, he thanked the people of the village for voting for him, and concluded by saying, "one thing's for certain, we're not going to forget you here", to loud applause from the assembled audience. Following the official opening ceremony, he dismounted the stage and disappeared into a pub across the road, whereupon he was literally besieged by people wishing to speak to him. One local man turned to me and said,

There you go, if you want anything done, want a grant, go and see him now. He's going into the pub, buy him a drink, take him aside, have a chat. No problem!.

Garvin has characterised the usual experience of the politician in Ireland in terms of being continually "terrorised" by local people (1991: 44) and, as the following brief portrait suggests, this is a view to which most M.C.C.s in Donegal would probably subscribe.

Denis McGonagle, a Fianna Fáil member for the Buncrana CEA in the Inishowen peninsula, which has a total of six seats on Donegal County Council, is one of the longest-serving councillors in the county, being first elected in 1961. The constituency is divided geographically between the six representatives, with Denis covering an area in the north bordered by the towns of Carndonagh, Malin and Culdaff, a task he shares with a Fine Gael councillor, Bernard McGuinness. He is a married man in his mid-50s, and lives in a recently-built two storey house just outside Carndonagh, the second largest town on the peninsula. He is a glazier by trade, and for the past ten years has been managing his own business selling UPVC windows and doors. I met Denis at his house on a very wet September morning, and he greeted me with his wife at the door; he was dressed very smartly, and was

wearing a Donegal County Council tie. Whilst I had a list of pre-prepared questions, the “interview” was conducted in a very informal manner, and much of what I describe below was supplied by Denis without any particular prompting by myself. He began by describing his day-to-day life as a councillor.

The pressures placed upon councillors are starkly illustrated by the number of meetings that they are expected to attend. In the twelve months from July 1996 to July 1997, Denis was present at 63 council meetings in Lifford, from a total of 85 meetings that were held⁴², which meant that he had to forego some of his expenses since councillors have to attend at least 80% of meetings in order to be able to claim their full entitlement for the year. This is in addition to attendance at the meetings of voluntary groups and various public events held in his area, all of which means that he can have up to four engagements in any one night. He often goes along to local gatherings with Bernard McGuinness, and, despite their differing political affiliations, they meet on a regular basis to discuss issues of importance in the peninsula.

I wouldn't agree with a lot of what Bernard says, but we do have a lot of contact. You may fight away at local level, but once you get to council level, you all work together for Inishowen. You've got to.

As well as these responsibilities, Denis also makes himself available as much as possible to his constituents. He receives, on average, 30-40 enquiries per week from members of the public, and often has to deal with up to 20 telephone calls or personal visits during the course of one weekday evening.⁴³

The thing is, if a boy comes to your door at eight o'clock at night, you can't say come back another night, because he'll just go to another public representative, and come election time...No, you can't turn people away, but it can be a problem, because it disrupts your home life. It's one of the prices you pay for being a councillor, I suppose.

⁴² *Donegal People's Press* 5th. Nov. 1997.

⁴³ Sacks provides a breakdown of the number of enquiries which one (unnamed) County Councillor received over a set period in early 1970 (op. cit.: 92-3). He cites an overall total of 51 enquiries during the course of a month, which, taken with the evidence above, suggests that councillors have become, if anything, more important for members of the public over the intervening period.

Most people come to him with enquiries relating to a fairly narrow range of issues, surrounding group-water schemes, medical cards, housing, roads and social welfare payments, which seem to be typical of the general nature of enquiries which all councillors in Donegal can expect to deal with.⁴⁴

You have to chase each of these up with the relevant people in the County Council or the government departments, which leaves you very little time for your own job. I'm lucky, because I'm self-employed, but if I had to work 9-5 every day, I don't think my boss would be very pleased with all the time off I'd have to ask for.

In 1995-6, Denis was chairman of the council, and the additional responsibilities which this entailed meant that he basically had to put his own business on hold over the year. As chairman, he was provided with a total allowance of £14,000, which included the expenses he was entitled to receive as an ordinary M.C.C., but found that this in no way compensated for the earnings he was forced to forego, and in fact barely covered the costs of the petrol he spent travelling around Donegal. The major duties he had as chairman, above those of a normal councillor, included attending the opening of various events throughout the county, something he describes as "doing the donkey work for the TDs", and preparing the paper work for meetings. The events he was expected to attend took in the whole of the county, and

if you go to Letterkenny one night, that's an eighty mile round-trip; sometimes, I had to go to Glencolumbkille, which is a 150 mile round trip. Even a trip to Lifford is an hour's drive. Donegal's a big area.

The experience and attitude of this particular politician is largely typical of those throughout the county: councillors view their role in terms of providing an important and necessary link between the local people and government departments or the executive arm of the local authority, and certainly would never admit that the influence which they are able to exert on these instruments of the State is in any way "imaginary". In the words of one independent councillor:

⁴⁴ The type of enquiries which the councillor cited by Sacks dealt with bear remarkable similarity to those which councillors usually receive today.

You get to know the civil servants, and most of them are very helpful. People have no access to the relevant departments, you see, and politicians are important. But there's a fine line between helping people and abusing your position, you've got to be quite careful. But if you can help people out a bit, you will.

The fine balancing act between "helping people and abusing your position" is one that all councillors are very much aware of, and it would seem reasonable to assume that most perform it well. However, this has not always been the case: as alluded to earlier, the power of the political hegemony during the 1960s in Donegal was such that councillors were in a position to manipulate more areas of decision-making activity than they are able to today. Sacks discusses at length the influence of politicians in the selection procedure for public-sector appointments, and speculates about the number of overtly political decisions that were made in this area during the period of the Blaney family's dominance. Although he was unable to generate any definite evidence of Fianna Fáil "jobbery" in the employees of Donegal County Council during his fieldwork, he quotes a short poem from James O'Toole's book *Man Alive* to illustrate the general attitude of politicians from opposition parties towards the dominant political hegemony.⁴⁵

Without pull in Holy Island
Though you saint and scholar be
You don't stand a bloody earthly
With selection committees.

At the time of his research, one area where appointments still remained in the hands of county councillors was the selection of rates inspectors:

With Fianna Fáil's majority on the County Council, this process consisted essentially of an intraparty struggle to determine who would receive the party's nomination. /.../The list of rate collectors read...like a directory of Fianna Fail's Who's Who and their families (p. 85, 87).

This power was removed from county councillors in the early 1970s, due to

⁴⁵ op. cit.: 84. (Sacks in fact took the poem from an independent politician quoted in the *Donegal Democrat*).

widespread disquiet about the number of political appointments that were being made. One particular councillor whom I spoke to reminisced at length about this process:

Rates inspectors were supposed to go through a testing selection process before being appointed, you see, which included an exam. But if you were in with the party, you could get a job no problem. There were even people appointed who had failed the exam. After that, though, you would be at the beg and call of the party. Oh yes, there were many strange revaluations of rateable values at that time [laughs].

In common with Sacks, I was also unable to uncover any firm evidence which would indicate any degree of favouritism in selection procedures. However, this does not preclude the possibility that it still occurs. Although all public-sector appointments are now ostensibly made on a non-political basis, many people in Donegal will approach politicians for help in securing employment as a matter of course. The general feeling that councillors retain a great deal of power is a view that appears to be not restricted to older generations, or to people living in the more remote areas, and it would be not over stating the case to say that the ethos expressed in the dictum cited above remains salient for many in the county. This is testified by the fact that the term "Mafia" is still widely used in local parlance, referring not only to the Fianna Fáil hegemony, as it was in the 1960s, but now to all politicians. Local councillors are judged in part by their efficacy in "getting the best deal" for their constituents, and their reputation in this regard has an important bearing upon their electoral support. One individual whom I knew well admonished a particular politician by comparing her to her husband, also a politician, who had died a few years previously:

-- was great, really good. Anything you ever wanted doing, it would be done, just like that [clicks his fingers]. I once went to him to get a job in the hospital, and I had a job the next day, night porter. He knew people on the Health Board, you see. I was there for two years. Oh, he was a great feller. But his wife- she's hopeless. She doesn't know anyone, you see, she's got no pull. I didn't vote for her last time.

Whether or not this attitude stems from the adeptness of politicians for manipulating information or a reflection of a genuine ability to influence decisions is impossible to say with any degree of certainty; it may simply be a matter of “old habits dying hard”. However, the fact that politicians are well represented on certain bodies which have responsibility for appointments in the public sector (most notably the North Western Health Board and the Vocational Educational Committee) suggests that opportunities exist for them to exploit their role on a partisan basis; indeed, these organisations are widely regarded as being subject to political influence in Donegal.⁴⁶ This view was confirmed for many local people by two incidents which occurred in the early 1990s.

Prior to 1993, VECs in Ireland were responsible for the management of Regional Technical Colleges as well as Vocational Schools. New legislation passed in 1993 took RTCs out of the hands of local committees and under the direct control of the Department of Education, a move motivated in part by the results of an investigation undertaken by the latter into events in Donegal. The Department’s enquiry was precipitated in 1991, when the VEC appointed the town clerk for Letterkenny, an individual who was widely known to be a close personal friend of the chairman, Bernard McGlinchey, to the management board of the RTC, as finance director. The fact that the person in question had no academic qualifications apart from a leaving certificate, or any previous experience of a similar role, was in direct contravention of the specifications contained in the original job advertisement, which stated that the post-holder would require a degree or its equivalent. Following legal action by the unsuccessful applicants, the VEC was eventually taken to the High Court, which found against it and in favour of the plaintiffs. However, the college subsequently appealed to the Supreme Court, which ruled that they could legally change the rules under which appointments were made during the application process. Despite this victory, there was some fall-out from the episode: the Students’ Union of the college moved their weekly discos from the “Golden Grill” to another night-club in the town in protest⁴⁷ and, rather more significantly, the principal of the RTC was eventually forced to resign. There was a general feeling that McGlinchey had “overstepped his mark” on this occasion; however, the person in question

⁴⁶ According to Sacks:

Applicants for teaching positions generally made it a practice to canvass all [V.E.] committee members prior to their formal considerations by that body, and hence appointment to the committee was considered to be a patronage-giving position (ibid.: 87).

remains in the same post at the college.

The second incident also involved the Regional Technical College, which passed a resolution in 1991 to allow the head of the science department to relocate to Brussels to act as the college's representative to the EU. Given that the R.T.C. was (and is) one of the smallest tertiary level colleges in Ireland, with a student population at the time of only 1,515 students- the size of an average secondary school- the Department of Education, upon learning of the proposal, refused to sanction the move. However, the college allowed the individual in question to go anyway without informing the Department, who assumed that he was still teaching in Letterkenny until the R.T.C. was investigated in 1993 as a result of the incident described above.⁴⁸ Obviously the Department did not have access to the Council's minutes⁴⁹, as the following item was recorded in summer 1992:

European Officer. The chairman proposed that the council make a contribution to --, who was currently on secondment from the VEC⁵⁰ and acting as their representative in Brussels. It was stated that if council were to pay --'s accommodation costs, he would look after the Council's interest in Brussels. A number of members spoke in favour of the motion, with others expressing the view that while an Officer in Europe was of vital importance to the council, further consideration should be given to the matter before a firm contract was entered into with any individual. The Chairman then read out the following extract from the Minutes of General Purposes Committee Meeting held on the 8th. June 1992.

⁴⁷ This event itself led to a protracted dispute between the Students' Union and the College, which was reported by the *Times Higher Educational Supplement* in 1994. Upon learning of the S.U.'s decision, one of the directors of the Golden Grill, Paul McGlinchey (Bernard's brother) wrote to all second and third year students canvassing support for the establishment of an alternative entertainments committee. Furthermore, when the Students' Union presented their annual accounts to the RTC's Governing Body in 1993, Bernard McGlinchey produced receipts from the Golden Grill which appeared to contradict the S.U.'s figures. The Sabbatical Officers of the SU were therefore barred from standing for election to the Governing Body, a member of the "alternative" committee being appointed in their place. The Department of Education, which published a damning report on the events at the RTC in 1994, described McGlinchey's production of documentation from an establishment which he owned as "particularly unwise", and went on that his "knowledge and skill placed him in a superior position in the college's management strata and combined with his approach, pulled him into a level of involvement in college affairs which was much too detailed". The Data Protection Commissioner was also appointed to discover how the confidential list of student names and addresses came to be in Paul McGlinchey's possession, a matter that was referred to the police subsequently. (Walshe, J. "Sparks Fly at Golden Grill". *The Times Higher Educational Supplement*, November 11th. 1994: 11).

⁴⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹ This is not particularly surprising, as council minutes for one year are not lodged in Donegal County Library, the only place where they may be read, until well into the following year.

⁵⁰ The fact that the individual concerned is described as being on secondment from the VEC, not the RTC, indicates the degree to which the management structures of the two organisations were essentially coterminous at the time.

‘The Committee also noted that --, who was on secondment from the VEC was acting as their Representative in Brussels. The VEC were paying --’s salary and the Committee recommended that the County Manager contact the Principal of the Regional College with a view to ascertaining if an arrangement could be reached within the VEC whereby the council would contribute towards accommodation costs in Brussels and -- would act as the Council’s agent in Brussels also’.

The chairman stated that this was another example of motions being passed and no action being taken. It was agreed that a report would be submitted to the next General Purposes Committee, where the matter would be given further consideration.⁵¹

Although this proposal never came to fruition, it was widely known in Donegal that, once again, the individual concerned was (and is) a close friend of the chairman of the VEC, Bernard McGlinchey.⁵² Whether these widely reported incidents demonstrate the existence of patronage is impossible to say, but the important point to note is that they enhanced the *perception* among local people of the power of local politicians in relation to public appointments. In a similar way, the following case serves to illustrate further the fact that patronage may not be as imaginary as it might first appear.

Patrick lives in a small village located just outside Letterkenny, and has been working for a number of years as a mental health nurse. He has always been employed on short-term contracts, but in 1997, he learnt that a permanent post was about to become available at a day-hostel for the disabled, in Inishowen. His family hails from the north of the county, and his father grew up with a prominent local T.D.; he has remained good friends with him all his life. Patrick rang the T.D. about the post, and when his call was returned two days later, he was told that the job was his, but not to tell anyone about it. [At the time, the T.D. in question was chairman of the North Western Health Board]. It was another two months before he was actually interviewed for the post, and, by his own admission, he “made a

⁵¹ Donegal County Council Minutes of Meetings, 27th. July 1992.

⁵² According to a number of my informants, the origin of the motion lay in the fact that the individual wished to move his family to Brussels to be with him. Although this did not happen, his wife, a teacher, was appointed to a senior position in a local secondary school in Letterkenny soon afterwards.

right hash" of the interview, "but it didn't matter, as I knew I had the job anyway". However, events did not work out entirely as planned. The return drive to Inishowen each day took over two hours, and Patrick found that there was only one other person working at the hostel, who worked the alternate shift. As he had been working at a large hospital previously, he began to miss the company of others at work, and eventually decided to phone the T.D. back. The politician spoke immediately to the Chief Executive Officer of the NWHB, and within two days, he was told that he had been appointed to another permanent post at his original place of work.

Outside the arena of appointments, there are a number of specific areas where councillors are able to take decisions without reference to agents of the State: these reserve functions are well-known to their constituents and form the bulk of requests for help that politicians receive. Perhaps the major issues in this regard are in relation to the areas of housing and planning, in which councillors have retained a modicum of influence, and the principal business of the monthly council meetings is taken up with debates concerning individual planning applications that have been made to the council. Usually, one or more members will act as advocates for each, since the promoters are often well-known to them and will have approached them in the first instance for help in the approval process. In the words of one (independent) councillor, "if you're in with the right crowd, you could build a house in the middle of the street if you wanted to". Should an application be turned down by the county executive, councillors, as a last resort, are entitled to table a special motion known as the "Section 4" . Brought in as an amendment to the 1955 City and County Management Act in order to give councillors more power, this is an instrument which, in theory, enables councillors to force the County Manager to carry out their wishes, even if he has originally blocked a proposal. It is most widely used in relation to planning applications, and represents one of the principal mechanisms through which local politicians are able to exercise their role as patrons. It is however, a rather blunt instrument, as the following exchange demonstrates:

Councillor Loughrey was informed that he was cosignatory to 20 section 4 motions since the beginning of the year. Of these, 1 was withdrawn, 3 were deemed to be invalid, 7 were not move and 9 were adopted. No specific financial provision was made in respect

of the motions adopted and they were to be considered with all the motions adopted by the council in consideration of the estimates for 1992. Clr. Loughrey asked what was the point in having Section 4 motions passed if no work was going to take place as a result. The Manager informed the meeting that unless finance was provided to finance the motion, no action could take place.⁵³

Section 4 motions are often the source of heated dispute between representatives and the executive, and County Managers have attempted to curb their use by councillors on a number of occasions in the past. In early 1991, for example, the number of Section 4 motions put forward by councillors had risen alarmingly, with a total of 37 being submitted in the first three months of the year. (1991 was a local election year). In March, the Deputy County Manager requested that members use Section 4s only as a last resort, "after a particular matter having been discussed with the County Manager and if the matter could not be agreed upon between the Manager and the members." He went on:

While the Manager is in no way disputing the right of individual members to submit Section 4 motions, none of the motions for today's meeting had been discussed with him, and in a number of cases the matters were already being dealt with. The Deputy County Manager requested the member's co-operation in discussing such matters in future with him, prior to Section 4 motions being submitted.⁵⁴

This appeal seemed to have had the desired effect, for in October of that year, a meeting took place where the County Manager congratulated the members over the fact that there were no section 4 motions on the agenda, for the first time since 1976. (The election was held in June). Section 4 motions are viewed by councillors as representing one of the last vestiges of real power that they possess, and continue to be used periodically at council meetings. They will often be tabled in full knowledge that the proposals are unfeasible, or are in contravention of planning laws; such requests are usually made for the benefit of the press rather than with any serious expectation that the executive will them carry out. In 1992, for example, six councillors

⁵³ Donegal County Council Minutes of Meetings 25th. Nov. 1991.

⁵⁴ Donegal County Council Minutes of Meetings 25th. March 1991.

from across the political spectrum tabled a Section 4 motion instructing the County Manger to build an international airport at Letterkenny.⁵⁵

In the case of issues which lie outside the local politicians' primary areas of concern, where their capacity for "pull" may be less certain, councillors sometimes employ what may be loosely termed Machiavellian tactics in order to manipulate the public's perception of their role. One of the most important strategies in this respect involves the use of the local media, something which saliently exemplifies the councillor's role as an information broker. As with the "Blaney News" column in the *Tirconnail Tribune*, "positive" announcements, concerning grant allocations, a new infrastructure project, or favourable economic statistics, for example, will invariably be associated with an individual politician when they come to be reported by the local newspapers, articles being prefaced with the words "councillor x has welcomed the announcement that...", or "councillor y has been informed by the Dept. of the Marine that...." This technique enables the particular politician to appear as though he or she has been in some way responsible for the decision, and is used to such an extent that it is unusual for such articles not to be prefaced in this way.⁵⁶ Furthermore, politicians will often

⁵⁵ Donegal County Council Minutes of Meetings 7th. December 1992. In the course of another meeting the same year, the County Manager gave his reasons for refusing planning permission for a housing development in west Donegal:

1. The development proposed would be seriously injurious to this area of high amenity by virtue of the fact that it lies between the County Road and the Lake and would obtrude into views of the lake from the adjacent public road. This road was designated a scenic road in the County Development Plan, 1988.
2. The development proposed sets an undesirable precedent for development between the lake shore and the public road, which was designated a scenic road in the County Development Plan, 1988.

The Manager also outlined that since the Planning Application was invalid at the date of receipt of the Section 4 motion, the motion if passed could not be acted upon by him. The motion was then put to the meeting, with 25 voting in favour and none against. The Chairman declared the motion carried.

The Chairman requested the manager [sic] that while accepting that he could not grant planning permission on the basis of the Section 4 as passed, that he give favourable consideration to the application bearing in mind the views of the councillors, which had been made quite clear in passing the motions. The Manager outlined that what he had to take into account was prescribed by law and he must have due regard to Planning matters only. His Planning Officers had recommended refusal and there was very little else that he could do but refuse the applications accordingly.

⁵⁶ An example of how this strategy is employed appeared in the *Tirconnail Tribune* on 5th. June 1997, under the headline "Blaney Welcomes Calhame Sewerage Scheme":

The I.F.F. leader Clr. Harry Blaney has welcomed the news that the long awaited extension to the Letterkenny Sewerage System to the Calhame area of the Mountain Top has got under way this week....Clr. Blaney has been promoting the scheme for some time and said that he was delighted that Calhame is now to get a proper scheme and he was glad that his representation with Donegal County Council and the Sanitary Service Section had now reached a successful conclusion.

Interestingly, MEPs also use this strategy. To take another example:

Pat the Cope Gallagher, MEP, has been informed by Michael Martin, TD, Minister for Education, that a grant in the sum of £12,665 has been approved in respect of replacement windows and doors and the refurbishment of paths and the play area at Roshine NS, Dungloe. Deputy Gallagher warmly welcomes the allocation (*Donegal People's Press*, 10th September 1997).

It may be noted that in this article, Mr. Gallagher is referred to as a Deputy, despite the fact that he had resigned his Dáil seat prior to the general election of the previous June; Dungloe is also his home town.

be party to information far in advance of any official announcement, enabling them actively to manipulate the media coverage of the particular issue. A case in point here occurred during 1997, and involved the provision of a new epidural service for Letterkenny General Hospital. The 9th. October edition of the Donegal Democrat carried a story under the heading "Epidural Service for Letterkenny Hospital Vital", in which a Fianna Fáil T.D., Mary Coughlan, was reported to be angry that Donegal had no epidural provision. On December 11th., in the same newspaper, it was announced that a junior health minister had agreed to allocate the necessary funds for the service, and that an application for the funds had, in fact, been originally forwarded to the Department of Health by the local Health Board as early as the previous February. In the same article, another T.D. was quoted as saying that other Oireachtas members- referring clearly to Mary Coughlan- "took no interest in this matter until a month ago".

It will now be clear from the evidence presented here that it is extremely difficult to map out the boundary between "imaginary" and "real" patronage, and to thereby estimate the extent to which Donegal county councillors are able to influence those working in the local authority executive or government departments on behalf of their constituents. However, data from other parts of the country suggest that, in reality, it is unlikely that many decisions are affected by their intervention, and there is no particular reason to suppose that Donegal is any different in this respect. One senior officer with the Department of Social Welfare stated that he often received deputations from councillors, and summed up the prevailing attitude in the following terms:

You treat them politely, smile, nod your head sympathetically, and then when they've gone do exactly as you were going to do before.⁵⁷

Councillors operate within a very narrow- and well-defined- set of structures, outside of which they have little control. It would be true to say that as the Irish civil service has expanded over the past few decades, and its centralising tendencies have deepened, its employees have become increasingly impervious to the demands of councillors. This factor, combined with the new arrangements which have been established to facilitate development

⁵⁷ Interview with P.J. Buggy, Department of Social Welfare, Ballyshannon 7th. Nov. 1997.

activity, has led to a relative decline in the importance of politicians in providing a link between the State and the locale. However, the size of the gap, for many of the county's citizens, remains very wide indeed, and this factor, combined with the politician's ability to manipulate information, has ensured the continuing salience of the local councillor's role.

V. Ideological Bases of Political Activity.

Travellers, Nationalism and the EU.⁵⁸

In analysing and deconstructing the nature of a particular discourse of development, it is necessary to understand the values which underpin and give rise to it. As has been suggested, the attitude of councillors towards the development process differs sharply from those working professionally in the development sector, as well as many people involved with voluntary community groups.⁵⁹ This dichotomy is rooted not only in divergent conceptions about the meaning of development, the purposes it is put to, and the practices involved in its execution, but is also manifest in differing attitudes towards certain important aspects of contemporary Irish society, which therefore serve to crystallise this ideological bifurcation and may be utilised in order to illustrate these contrasts. In this section, the opinion of councillors towards three such issues, namely travellers, Northern Ireland and the EU, will be discussed, as a means by which the values of politicians may be compared to those working in the development sector, described in previous chapters.

V.1. The Travelling Community.

In common with most counties in Ireland, Donegal has a substantial itinerant population. Any visitor to the county cannot help but be struck by the large numbers of caravans gathered together on patches of wasteground, on the sides of main roads and in lay-bys, the physical marginalisation of this

⁵⁸ This section is drawn from data derived from extended interviews with a number of councillors throughout Donegal, minutes of council meetings and newspaper reports. Firstly, however, a note of caution. As has been mentioned previously, it is obviously very difficult to treat Donegal County Council as a unitary category, and, realistically, all I am able to do here is suggest a number of common themes which have emerged from my research in this area.

⁵⁹ To this, a caveat must be added. Many people involved in community groups actually have a similar conception of development as local politicians, but are opposed to the personalised nature of politics in the county: as we have seen in previous chapters, the most common reason for establishing a community group is in order to lobby the county council. Generally speaking, then, although the voluntary sector displays a similarly antagonistic relationship with the county council as that which exists between the professional sector and councillors, the reasons behind this are due to the perceived neglect of the latter in providing services and resources for their areas, rather than being rooted in ideology.

group a direct reflection of their social status in Irish society. A large body of literature has emerged in recent years documenting the discrimination suffered by members of the travelling community at the hands of both the State and other Irish people, something compounded by their stereotypical characterisation as the "Other within". Travellers in Donegal are generally perceived to be uncouth and "dirty", are often blamed for criminal activity, and are most definitely "not like us". Whilst the local authority has a statutory obligation to provide designated spaces for travellers, it has neither the resources nor the political will to make permanent facilities available, with the result that travellers are often criminalised through illegal parking, and are forced to move continuously between manifestly unsuitable sites lacking even the most basic of amenities. The attitude of councillors towards the travelling community ranges from indifference to active hostility, their views undoubtedly reflecting those of many in the settled population: in interviews, a number of councillors cited the "problem of travellers" as one of the principal areas of concern brought up by local people in submissions to them, something highlighted by the frequency with which the council discusses this particular issue.⁶⁰ The following extracts from the council minutes typify the general attitude:

Cleaning up Refuse and Scrap left by travelling people. Cllr Devenny was informed that this work was normally carried out by D.C.C. Cllr Devenny asked that the council consider closing the road at Ray, Manorcunningham, where a particularly bad problem existed with travelling people.⁶¹

That this council take immediate action to resolve the problem, for the people of Maghecar, Bundoran, caused by periodic parking in that area of large groups of mobile travelling families and the subsequent rubbish accumulation that occurs as a result of their stay. The council members were informed that the council would

⁶⁰ The relationship between the travelling community and the local authority in Donegal is a reflection of the situation prevailing nationally. According to Coyle, the provision of accommodation for travellers "has been one of the most contentious roles for local authorities in recent years". She goes on,

On the one hand, the rights of the travelling community to accommodation or halting sites with certain basic facilities, such as running water and toilets, is now widely accepted. On the other hand, however, there is still a very high level of public opposition to halting sites and to the allocation of local authority houses to traveller families. Existing facilities fall far short of an acceptable standard, both in terms of the level of services available on halting sites and also the absence of appropriate mechanism for facilitating an input by the travelling community in determining accommodation requirements (1996: 292).

⁶¹ Donegal County Council Minutes of Meetings 24th. Feb. 1992.

continue to pursue this matter in the usual way, i.e. the individual caravans would be visited by the local engineer accompanied by a member of the Gardai to inform the occupants that they should move immediately, and to note the names of the owners/occupiers in order to consider pursuing the matter through the courts in the event that the caravans were not removed.⁶²

Travellers at Ballybofey and Lifford. Cllr McGowan was informed that the usual procedure had been followed in relation to the problem at the above location, i.e. the sites had been visited by the County Engineer for the area accompanied by a member of the Gardai in order to gather names of the individual occupiers/owners of the caravans to facilitate any legal proceedings and to tell them that they must vacate the sites. The owners/occupiers gave their names willingly and stated that they would move if the council provided an alternative site for them. It was considered that any court proceedings in these cases would not succeed as there were no designated hard stand facilities in these areas.⁶³

It will be obvious that these views are anathema to those working in the development sector, both from an ideological and professional point-of-view. Many of the EU programmes currently operating in Donegal (e.g. INTEGRA (one of the three strands of the EMPLOYMENT initiative), the Local Development Programme and the PRP) incorporate elements targeted specifically at the travelling community, and, as we have seen, Letterkenny itself contains a number of projects and purpose-built training facilities designed to cater for the needs of this group. (Most notable in this respect are the Donegal Travellers Project and St. Fiachra's Training Centre).

Thus the somewhat narrow conception of development held by politicians also has parallel ramifications on an ideological level, a kind of "spillover effect", which serves to encapsulate the difference in attitude between the politicians and the professional development sector towards the nature, meaning and intended purposes of the process. This point is perhaps even more starkly illustrated by the politician's attitude towards Irish nationalism.

⁶² Donegal County Council Minutes of Meetings 25th. Jan. 1993.

⁶³ Donegal County Council Minutes of Meetings 27th. April 1992.

Unsurprisingly, given the County's location and political history, the members of Donegal County Council are, almost without exception, firmly committed to the ideals of Irish Republicanism, and the history of the Fianna Fáil party in Donegal is one in which nationalist concerns have played a prominent part. As alluded to earlier, many of its members are related to prominent Republican activists of the past, and the violence in Ulster in the past thirty years has re-kindled memories of these old associations. Thus Neil Blaney claimed in 1972 that he himself was responsible for the creation of the Provisional IRA⁶⁴, through his role in prompting the split in the Sinn Féin party two years earlier.⁶⁵

The tensions across the border have formed a continuous backdrop to political activity in the county for much of this century, and the Blaney gun-running scandal of the early 1970s is just one of a number of occasions when ideological nationalism has been combined with tacit support for militant action. In August 1969, during rioting in Derry, Neil Blaney, then the Minister of Agriculture, advocated the use of the Republican troops to seize the city by force, something that would have been tantamount to an invasion of Northern Ireland.⁶⁶ More recently, in 1993, one of the members of the Council- Sinn Féin Councillor Eddie Fullerton- was assassinated at his home in Buncrana by a Ulster Volunteer Force brigade from across the border, an action which provoked outrage in Donegal, a county which has had few experiences of violent sectarianism.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ *The Times*, Profile of Neil Blaney 12th. February 1972. (It may be noted that the Provisional IRA was formed in Moville, in Inishowen (Sunday Times Insight Team 1972: 185), and Donegal continues to be a favoured meeting-place for members of the IRA's Army Council. The current ceasefire, for example, was announced following a meeting in Gweedore in the west of the county).

⁶⁵ This claim is confirmed by Conor Cruise O'Brien, in his book *States of Ireland*:

It seems that some of the rich and of the influential not only welcomed the provisionals, but helped them come into being. After the split, the Official Sinn Féin- I.R.A. charged that certain people in Mr. Lynch's cabinet, notably Mr. Neil Blaney, Minister for Agriculture, and Mr. Charles Haughey, Minister of Finance, had actually caused the split. They first tried, it was alleged- it seems as early as February 1969- to get the I.R.A. as a whole to drop its political activities in the South, and concentrate on military activities in the North. When they failed with the I.R.A. leadership, they then worked at other levels in the movement, and succeeded in detaching important elements, especially in the North, promising- and to some extent delivering- money, guns and other forms of help (1972: 209).

⁶⁶ The Sunday Times Insight Team assert that Blaney along with his fellow cabinet colleagues, Kevin Boland and Charles Haughey, (who were together responsible for policy on the North in Jack Lynch's government) developed a fully-formed invasion plan, which would have involved not only the seizure of Derry, but also a simultaneous invasion in the south east of Ulster to take control of Lurgan and the Toome Bridge. The plan was that the two invasion forces would join up east of Lough Neagh, and then move into Belfast. It seems that the invasion was only averted by Lynch granting the three ministers absolute autonomy over Ulster policy, something which led directly to the gun-running scandal (Sunday Times Insight Team 1972: 178-182; see also Sacks 1976: 209).

⁶⁷ For a lucid overview of the relationship between social structure and political violence in two villages (Pettigo and Roslea) in the adjacent county of Fermanagh, see Vincent 1989.

In addition, the landscape of the county is interspersed with various symbolic reminders of nearly three decades of conflict in Ulster. The county council offices in Lifford are within sight of one of the most heavily-fortified border crossings in Ireland, the corrugated fencing and bullet-proof conning towers of the British army check-point across the river Foyle piercing the skyline and providing a stark illustration of the effects of partition. Similarly, the county town, Letterkenny, contains a number of permanent signs promoting nationalist causes sponsored by the Donegal Saoirse Committee⁶⁸, sporting slogans such as "Peace Through British Withdrawal", and detailing the plight of individuals from the county currently being held in English jails.⁶⁹ The power of the elected members in matters relating to nationalism is demonstrated by the fact that these hoardings, some of which are over 25 foot high and dominate their surroundings, have been erected in the absence of planning permission.⁷⁰ The arrest of Maze escapee and IRA member Tony Kelly in October 1997 in Letterkenny, where he had been living openly with his wife and family for a number of years, prompted an immediate response from the Saoirse Committee, who organised a leafletting and fly-poster campaign, and a protest march through the town, which was joined by various local politicians. Harry Blaney, in justifying his decision to put up £20,000 in bail money for Kelly, stated that:

We do regard them as political prisoners no matter what people might say. They are no less political than those who went out in 1916 or those who were involved in the War of Independence and the Civil War. There is no difference. We all came from that source.⁷¹

In council meetings, nationalist sentiments are rarely far from the surface. Motions are regularly put forward from members expressing the ideological commitment of the council to a united Ireland through British withdrawal

⁶⁸ A Republican pressure group campaigning for the release of prisoners, *Saoirse* being the Irish word for freedom.

⁶⁹ A statement on one of the signs proclaims "Hugh Doherty, from Carrigart. 25 years in an English jail. Bring him home now", referring to the brother of the current Sinn Féin Vice President Pat Doherty, who also stood as a candidate in the 1997 general election in Donegal North East. Hugh Doherty was a member of the Balcombe Street gang, responsible for a number of bombings in southern England in the early 1970s and the murder of Ross McWhirter, the founder of the Guinness Book of Records. They are also widely believed to be the real "Guildford Four".

⁷⁰ In 1995, the Labour Party member on D.C.C., Sean Maloney, was advised by the County Manager that no planning permission had ever been sought for the signs and that they were unauthorised. He reassured Cllr Maloney that the matter was being dealt with under the planning regulations (Donegal County Council Minutes of Meetings, 29th. May 1995). However, since this time, planning permission has not been granted and yet the signs remain. One, located by the side of the main road to Derry, was repainted in August 1997, after it had been partially burned by persons unknown earlier in the year.

⁷¹ *Derry People and Donegal News* 7th. November 1997.

from the “six counties”, and these are very rarely contested, even by the two Protestant members of the council. A typical example here came from councillor MacElhinny at a meeting in 1991, which was accepted unopposed:

That this council in the 75th. Anniversary year of the 1916 Rising declares itself in full agreement with the ideals and objectives, as set out in the Proclamations of the Provincial Government, Easter 1916, and resolves to continue to press for a full British military withdrawal from our country.⁷²

The general election in 1997 demonstrated the importance of nationalism for politicians, with no less than three of the six parties which fielded candidates in the Donegal North East constituency (Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin and Independent Fianna Fáil) proclaiming themselves to be “The Republican Party”, a tag-line included as a sub-title on publicity material and the phenomenal array of advertising hoardings which were erected around the county.⁷³ There was, in effect, little variation between the manifestos of the five main parties (Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Sinn Féin, Labour and Independent Fianna Fáil) in relation to Northern Ireland, with only the Donegal Progressive Party, an independent organisation led by a local Protestant councillor, offering any real alternative for the electorate in this area. Whilst the Fianna Fáil message was rather muted, Independent Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin attempted to compete with one another on the basis of their relative claims to represent the “only true Republican voice”, the former going one step further than Sinn Féin by calling for an “immediate and unequivocal British withdrawal from the North”.⁷⁴ Some candidates attempted to distance themselves from these overtly republican sentiments, with the veteran Fine Gael T.D. Paddy Harte stating in an election address that:

In relation to Northern Ireland, I believe that when I state that I just want to be Irish, I am doing so because once you define yourself as nationalist/unionist/loyalist/republican, you are creating division. The one thing that we all share is being Irish and we should emphasise that rather than create division.⁷⁵

⁷² Donegal County Council Minutes of Meetings, 25th. March 1991.

⁷³ One of the hoardings was actually erected in the middle of a graveyard (*Donegal's Peoples Press* 4th. June 1997).

⁷⁴ Independent Fianna Fáil News June 1997.

It is impossible to say whether the stance adopted by the various parties affected their electoral performance in 1997, but with Harry Blaney topping the poll in the constituency of Donegal North East, resulting in the loss of Fine Gael's only seat (held by Paddy Harte), it certainly did not appear to do them any harm. Evaluating the level of support for Republican concerns among the county's electorate in any systematic manner is a complex undertaking, however, and beyond the scope of this study. Nationalism-like religion- is rarely discussed in anything but the most cursory terms in Donegal, particularly with outsiders, and thus the overt and strident sentiments expressed by politicians in relation to this issue are in direct contrast to the rather muted way in which the subject is treated by their constituents.⁷⁶

The fact that nationalism is "played up" by politicians also serves to further the social separation between themselves and those working in the development sector, an arena in which it is invariably "played down". This is not to suggest necessarily that those operating as professional development actors do not share the types of views expressed by politicians concerning this issue, it is simply that, by virtue of the social context in which they work, and the particular set of influences which structure their actions, any opinions which appear to be divisive and opposed to the ethos expressed in European Union development programmes are sanctioned by social consensus, their articulation suppressed. As we have seen, the promotion of cross-border and cross-community projects is an integral component in a number of EU programmes, and various community groups in Donegal are involved in joint initiatives with partners from Northern Ireland. In considering the final issue, then- the European Union itself- the aim is to uncover the way in which these attitudinal differences are manifested in the form of tensions over claims to the veracity, or otherwise, of community representation.

⁷⁵ *Donegal Democrat*, 5th. June 1997. As a side point, given that only 5% of Ulster Protestants describe their national identity as "Irish" this statement appears somewhat naive (Aughey 1996: 34).

⁷⁶ As Sacks observes:

Nationalism was a potent force in Donegal politics, but it never had as deep a hold as might be imagined...However, to the extent that nationalist ideology did take root, it has persisted longer here, primarily because of the impact of partition on east Donegal. Moreover, the disproportionate percentage of older people in the county (as in most rural areas) means that the number of people who remember 'the troubles' is still large. Thus, ideological appeals remain a strong and reliable chord to play upon during election campaigns (1976: 37-8).

In addressing the question of how councillors understand, reify and utilise the European Union, it is necessary, first of all, to discriminate strongly between the idea of the EU as an abstract concept- what it actually represents- and the organisation's operations "on the ground" in Donegal, a distinction commonly made -or implied- by local politicians themselves.

With reference to the first point, the attitude of councillors towards the EU is testimony above all to the organisation's symbolic role, and also serves to demonstrate the paradox with which the EU is itself faced in promoting the concept of "unity in diversity". On the one hand advocating the dismantling of internal borders and an "ever closer union between the peoples of Europe" whilst at the same time allowing the increasing articulation of regional and sub-national interests, the EU is confronted by the dilemma caused by the apparent incommensurability of these twin aims. In a similar way, most local politicians in Donegal do not see any contradiction in their overwhelmingly positive view of the aims of the EU, and their voracious nationalist ideals couched in terms of opposition to the British presence in Ireland. Closer European Integration is fine, just as long as this does not include Britain. In part, this can be explained by the fact that politicians view the EU in a similar way to which they view development in general, in purely economic terms. As the opinion expressed by the hotel owner quoted above suggests, it is, first and foremost, a utilitarian resource, a "pot of gold" fuelling the growth of the "Celtic Tiger" and reversing decades of economic impoverishment and neglect. Councillors, along with everyone else, recognise the importance of EU contributions to the economy of the county, and matters relating to the EU are regularly discussed in the council chamber. However, their conception of the EU is rarely extended to encompass the political and social dimensions of the organisation's policies, and, in this, their attitude typifies the stance assumed by Irish politicians in general. As Chubb has made clear:

Most politicians, except perhaps for a few leaders, see the E.C. as 'over there'. Theirs is a view from the periphery. The Community ideals and a Community spirit are not embedded in Irish political culture. Irish interest has always been focused primarily upon the

economic matters, concentrating on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP); on maximising Ireland's 'take' from the E.C.; and, albeit in a more fuzzy way, on preserving neutrality while continuing to get a 'free ride' when it comes to security and defence (1992:315).

It is worth noting that a motion submitted in 1992 calling for Donegal County Council to "express its support to the continuous evolution of a more politically and economically integrated Europe" was declared to be irrelevant to Irish local government by the chairman, who refused to allow it to be moved.⁷⁷ This attitude of councillors towards the EU was highlighted during the general election campaign in 1997. Although all of the candidates made explicit references to the EU in their campaign material, these were almost exclusively centred around a commitment to fight for the retention of Objective 1 status for Ireland and/or the Border Region. No mention was made of EMU (which Ireland had, only weeks before, decided to join in the "first wave"), the Intergovernmental Conference, the expansion of the organisation, or other issues of importance to Ireland, which were clearly felt to be incidental in comparison to maintaining the level of support from the Structural Funds.

Despite this rather narrow ideological stance, the EU is nevertheless perceived as being favourable to local government, a countervailing force to the centralised nature of Irish politics, with at least the *potential* to redress the relative weakness of locally-elected bodies in comparison to the systems prevalent in other European countries. In a motion passed in 1995, for example, the council requested the government to "demonstrate its support for local government by putting into place a proper funding system and by signing relevant EU acts supportive of local government".⁷⁸ Similarly, a number of members of the D.C.C. sit on the Border Regional Authority, one of five regional bodies established by the government in 1992 under pressure from the EU, which requires member states to have some form of regional administration to oversee the operation of the Structural Funds. Although lacking in any real power, the Authority is seen very much by politicians as a means by which they are able to develop their own initiatives outside the ambit of government influence. For a number of years, its members have been attempting to establish a free trade zone between Northern Ireland and

⁷⁷ Donegal County Council Minutes of Meetings 27th. April 1992.

⁷⁸ Donegal County Council Minutes of Meetings 27th. March 1995.

the Border Counties, and the U.S., in conjunction with three cross-border political networks (the Irish Central Border Area Network, the North West Region Cross Border Group, and the East Border Regions Committee), an initiative pursued in the absence of any support from central government.⁷⁹

On the other hand, the “practical” dimensions of the EU’s activities have been greeted with rather less enthusiasm by councillors, whose opinion of the new structures which have emerged in the past decade to facilitate development in the county may be characterised as one of downright resentment. As has been shown in previous chapters, the development process has, in the main, by-passed the political sphere in recent years, with councillors being deliberately excluded from the boards of management of the various bodies responsible for the implementation of EU programmes and initiatives. Whilst the council has four seats on the County Enterprise Board and twelve on the Task Force for Peace and Reconciliation, these are the only EU-sponsored programmes which councillors are involved in, and the fact that councillors are in the minority on these bodies means that they generally have little say in the distribution of grants.

You’re only in an advisory role, really. You don’t have powers. You can decide on projects, but the allocation of money is done there, and it’s hard for us to influence where it goes, you know?

Exemplifying, from the perspective of the politicians, yet another attack on the remaining powers of elected local government, their antipathy is entirely understandable, particularly as councillors believe that all public money should be controlled by the county council, and view themselves as the only valid representatives of the local citizenry. Opposition towards EU bodies is often couched either in terms of the lack of any democratic mandate on the part of those involved- in both a professional or voluntary capacity- in their administration, something which, in the opinion of councillors, automatically negates any claims community sector appointees in particular may make to be in some way representative of, or spokespersons for, local communities, or through questioning their suitability for the role. The electoral procedures which have been put in place to ensure the rotation of board members are regarded suspiciously by politicians, since they are not founded, to use the

⁷⁹ A report in the *Belfast Telegraph* (27th September 1997) suggests that this factor will inevitably frustrate the initiative.

words of one particular councillor, on "true democratic principles". There is hence a certain irony to be found in the fact that the arguments put forward by politicians in discounting the veracity of participatory forms of democracy- motivated in part by resentment over their *non*-participation- are identical to the reasons that are cited by the board members of LEADER and Partnership companies in order to justify their decision to exclude politicians from their administrative arrangements in the first place. It might be worth comparing the following two quotations from local councillors with some of those expressed by members of the Community Workers' Co-op, described in chapter four:

There's 29 acting members in Donegal. I mean, people can say what they like about us, but we have to go out and get elected. We can be removed, you know. It's different for the people who sit on these bodies. They can't be removed. I think all the money should be channelled through us, and I think we'd do a better job than all of these agencies...But- and this is the problem- they won't accept working with us at all. All they're concerned about is holding onto their own power.

People are very confused about these agencies. They just see a group of 20 people in the paper: who are these people? The membership of the agencies is decided by a nod and a wink- 'oh, we'll put Mary on the board because she's good'. Its absurd that you have local councillors looking after small, narrow areas of activity, who have to put themselves up for election every five years, when you have such and such down the road controlling a whacking great budget, who isn't elected at all. I know that if some of these people did have to put themselves up for election, they wouldn't be in the positions they are.⁸⁰

The confusion created by the multitude of funding bodies is also source of frustration for councillors, as their lack of knowledge regarding the various programmes hampers their ability to inform their constituents about seeking grant-aid. As one councillor put it,

⁸⁰ One might suggest that the use by this (male) councillor of a female name here is indicative of the importance of gender in framing the divisions which exist between the political and professional development sectors. (See chapter five, section VI. 3).

You'd advise people in your own simple way, but you wouldn't be qualified. I mean, they're investing money, and you have to be very careful about what advice you give them...We have the IDA, Forbairt, INTERREG, the LEADER programme, the CEB, you know, all these, and you get lost in them...

Generally speaking, councillors tend not to discriminate between EU development agencies and those directly under the control of the government: having no real influence with any of them, they therefore treat them all with equal suspicion. Motions are regularly put forward in the council chamber questioning the effectiveness of one of the various agencies' activities⁸¹, and in interviews, a number of councillors mentioned specific instances which, for them, exemplified the indifference of development agencies to the plight of local people in Donegal. These "narratives" may be viewed as an attempt by politicians to personalise the activities of the bureaucracy, and reflect their own fundamental perception of the State apparatus: in private, councillors tend to talk not in terms of the actual agencies, as abstract phenomenon, but rather of the individuals who work for them. A case in point refers to a story related to me by a local councillor regarding a shirt factory located in Newtoncunningham, the home of himself and another local councillor. The firm was established by two brothers in 1961, in a converted mill in the village, and expanded rapidly, employing sixty local women by the middle of the decade. In 1992, the brothers decided that the premises had become too small for the size of the operation, and began to look for alternative sites. They approached several local agencies for grant-aid in order to help them relocate, but were told that a number of shirt factories had recently closed down in Derry, due to competition from the Far East, and were refused. This prompted the brothers to close down the factory altogether. The two councillors, together with the parish priest, organised a public meeting, and persuaded some of the workers to agree to a buy-out scheme and invest £2000 each of their redundancy money to form a locally-owned co-operative. They now have a full order book once again, but are still looking for different premises. As the councillor stated:

The thing is, what the I.D.A. doesn't understand is that they're operating in a niche market, and have a network of customers

⁸¹ Because it is charged specifically with job-creation in the county, the Industrial Development Authority is the most frequent target of politician's attacks.

already. That feller who works for them here, he always just looks at the international picture and takes no account of local conditions. These agencies are only interested in prestige projects, and there's no prestige in a shirt factory. When the co-op opened, though, you should have seen the faces that turned up! People who wouldn't normally go to Newton in a million years, and haven't been seen since.

V.3.1. The County Council Development Fund.

Despite the marginal role councillors play in the structures of development activity as a whole, involvement by the local authority in EU-sponsored development programmes has, however, provided them with at least one direct benefit. Early in 1992, the County Council made provision in the annual estimates for a sum of money which would be ring-fenced each year in order to match the funds being drawn down from various agencies (particularly the International Fund for Ireland), for projects undertaken by the authority. As part of the agreement struck between the executive and the councillors in establishing this Development Fund, it was decided that a small proportion of the money would be used to provide the latter with an annual sum of £1500⁸² to distribute in a discretionary manner to local community groups for specific community-led projects, either as a block or in three £500 "parcels". These funds have become an important resource for voluntary organisations, since they may be used as "seeding grants" for larger projects, or to match funding derived from EU agencies (although the high profile which the development fund has attracted in the county is somewhat at odds with its rather modest monetary value).⁸³ Like all other "favours" councillors are able to provide to their constituents, however, demand for development fund money far outstrips what councillors are able to supply, and from the perspective of community groups, the way in which allocations are made is viewed as being governed primarily by electoral considerations. In the words of a Presbyterian Minister involved in a development group:

⁸² This was later increased to £3000 per year.

⁸³ A number of residents' associations around the county (predominantly located in urban areas) have also received development fund money in order to carry out environmental improvement works, such as road sweeping, street-light repair and grass-cutting. Such groups often "buy in" services from the county council by employing council workers to do the work, work which is ostensibly the responsibility of the local authority in the first place.

They get a certain amount of money, and there must be some kind of caucus where they all divide it out in the most efficient way: 'if you give some to that group, then I'll send some here', and that type of thing.

Naturally, councillors would never admit that this occurs, and many employ clearly-defined strategies to ensure an appearance of neutrality. It seems that one of the most commonly-used tactics is to generate the impression that decisions on development fund spending ultimately resides with the local authority executive, thereby abnegating their own responsibility over its distribution. A case in point relates to the experience of a Residents' Association located on a housing estate in Ballybofey, a town close to the border, which applied (in 1996) to the County Council's Task Force for Peace and Reconciliation for a grant to construct a new playground on an area of wasteland near the estate. The estimated total cost of the project was £30000, and they were told that the maximum grant that could be obtained would be funded at a rate of 75%. They therefore set about attempting to generate the £7500 matching funding that would be needed⁸⁴, and approached two "friendly" local councillors in the hope of receiving money from their respective development funds. Initially, the councillors promised them £6500, and they managed to raise the outstanding amount from local residents. However, after "hearing nothing for months", they approached the councillors again, only to be told that the County Council considered other groups to have more pressing needs, and that their group was "down the list". In the words of the chairman of the group:

Basically, the County Manager had blocked the allocations of the councillors. I don't know whether anyone has tested this in court, because the development fund is supposed to be councillor's money to distribute, even though it's part of the local authority's budget...[A few months later] we went to see the council, and we were told that we were now at the top of the list. But we don't know what that means. I mean, no-one has ever seen the list- does it even exist?

⁸⁴ This particular example illustrates a profound disadvantage which community groups in urban areas are faced with in comparison to their counterparts in rural areas. In the case of the latter, the value of common land may be used as matching funding for an EU-sponsored project. In urban areas, however, land is often owned by the council, and therefore cannot be included in the community's contribution.

In interviews, County Council officials explicitly denied that they had any say over the distribution of the development funds of councillors, and therefore it appears that in this case the Residents' Association had been misled by the politicians.⁸⁵ The development fund does, however, provide politicians with at least a modest amount of funding to distribute to groups, and they are usually quick to publicise in the press any allocations that they do make.

In this sense, the operation of the fund encapsulates the way the development process as a whole is perceived and negotiated by councillors, in the same way that their attitude towards Northern Ireland and the Travelling Community reveals fundamental ideas about their conception of Irish society in general. These ideological expressions are rooted in the political tradition of Donegal and have altered little over the years. In this respect, Sacks was right to suggest that the Donegal Mafia survives, since the basic tenets of the political culture so lucidly described in his book remain largely intact, almost three decades later.

VI. Conclusions.

In this chapter, the part played by local politicians in the development process in Donegal has been examined in detail. To summarise, it has been argued that the role of local elections in the selection of councillors is of only marginal significance in determining the make-up of the council, the county's political culture ensuring that the principal locus of power, surrounding the Fianna Fáil hegemony, is rarely challenged. The relationship between politicians and local people remains a personal one, although the contemporary lack of powers of county councillors operate to prevent them from exercising their traditional function as patrons for the electorate in anything but the most limited sense. However, the power of imaginary patronage, most saliently exemplified, perhaps, by the politicians manipulation of information, enables them to *appear* to be acting in the best interests of their constituents at all times, and those minor patronage functions which they are able to undertake (for instance, in relation to planning applications) serve to extrapolate their power in the minds of the constituents. This factor, combined with appeals to ideology and the static nature of voting patterns, in which inter-generational

⁸⁵ The St. Johnston Development Group and the Kilmacrennan Development Association, described in chapter five, section IV.1. and chapter six, section II.1 respectively, also seem to have been subject to this strategy by the politicians with whom they were negotiating.

political loyalty plays a prominent part, act in such a way as largely to maintain the prevailing status quo.⁸⁶

The attitude of politicians to the EU, and development agencies in general, encapsulates the relationship between the ideological basis of political activity and the processes of development practice in Donegal. Councillors operate within a well-defined set of structures surrounding their personal ties to their constituents and state agencies, and development is seen as the product of the exploitation of these sets of interpersonal relations rather than as a result of a set of neutral actions taken by rational and "scientific" decision-makers. Faced with a situation, then, in which a new group has emerged to challenge their role as the primary "bridge" between local people and those who exert control over the allocation of resources- indeed, a situation where local people have become controllers of resources themselves through their involvement in the boards of management of EU programmes- councillors have resorted to questioning both the legitimacy of their claims to represent local people as well as the role they play in the development process. The "executive" arm of development agencies has also come in for similar criticism from politicians.

The preceding discussion suggests that Donegal politics has altered remarkably little since the late 1960s, when Paul Sacks conducted the fieldwork for his study. Many of the same individuals still sit on the county council; councillors utilise an essentially identical set of strategies to manipulate their constituents' perception of their importance and power; and, above all, perhaps, the Fianna Fáil party retains the same hegemonic position that they have occupied for much of this century. In order to understand the reasons why this is so, we must return to the events of the early 1970s, outlined in the first section of the chapter. By way of reminder, Sacks argues that the machine "collapsed" prior to the general election of 1973, following Neil Blaney's ejection from the government three years earlier. However, we have noted above how the independent party which subsequently emerged retains a prominent position in the polity of the county, exemplified above

⁸⁶ Girvin argues that the continuing dominance of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael in Irish politics is due to the endurance of a "political culture" rooted in the historical events of the early years of the century. In noting that Ireland has only relatively recently undergone significant industrialisation, he predicts, with Sacks, that traditional political values are unlikely to disappear in the immediate future:

It seems that change is normally associated with a time lag, and that it may take as long as thirty years in a stable democratic state for the consequences of economic change (industrialisation) to achieve its fullest expression in social terms and for this to be translated into political change (values) (1993: 390).

all perhaps, by Harry Blaney's election to the Dáil in the general election of 1997, when he also topped the poll. Herein lies the paradox of Sacks' analysis. While the Fianna Fáil party in Donegal was thrown into disarray by the gun-running revelations, Blaney himself was able to exploit these divisions- which he himself was responsible for- by running as an independent in 1973. Together with his brother, he created the Independent Fianna Fáil party in 1974, and was returned to the Dáil in the six general elections held over the following two decades (1977, 1981, 1982 (twice), 1987 and 1989). Clearly he was unable to wield the same political power as he had exerted previously, but his parliamentary career continued unabated nonetheless.

It might be suggested that the Blaneys' electoral successes have been due in part to the close working relationship established between the two local parties in the intervening years: according to a number of my informants, they essentially operate "as one" at the present time. Indeed, it appears that the only factor which has prevented their amalgamation is the relationship between I.F.F. and certain figures in the Fianna Fáil party nationally, which was strained by a series of personal disagreements between Charles Haughey and Neil Blaney after the former was first elected Taoiseach in 1979. Following the general election in 1987, for example, Charles Haughey was dependent upon a number of independent TDs to form a government, and in return for Neil Blaney's support, the parties agreed to a merger which would have also involved the latter taking a seat in a subsequent Haughey cabinet. Although another general election was averted, Haughey subsequently backtracked on the agreement, fearing rebellion from the more moderate elements in his own party. According to Harry Blaney, "[Haughey] was the obstacle to the unity of the two parties. He was the only obstacle".⁸⁷

Given Haughey's spectacular fall from grace during 1997, there seems to be little preventing the two parties from merging now, and one can only speculate as to the reasons why it has not occurred. One possible explanation lies in the fact that the two incumbent Fianna Fáil TDs in the constituency- Dr. Jim McDaid and Cecelia Keaveney⁸⁸- have garnered a loyal personal following during their short parliamentary careers, and the party would hence be reluctant to drop one of them in favour of Harry Blaney should a merger

⁸⁷ Quoted in *Donegal Democrat* 11th. November 1997.

⁸⁸ Cecilia Keaveney was actually elected ahead of Harry Blaney in the by-election which followed Neil's death in 1992.

occur. As an independent, Harry Blaney has also found himself in a highly privileged position in the Dáil, his vote having proved crucial to the maintenance of Bertie Ahern's coalition government on a number of occasions since the election⁸⁹, something which he has been able to exploit to his own electoral advantage in Donegal. Moreover, with the two parties essentially working together in the county, the Blaney and McGlinchey power bases have remained intact in the Milford and Letterkenny CEAs, the historical centres of their electoral support.

In the final chapter of his book, Sacks outlines the reasons why he believes the Donegal Mafia has "survived" in Donegal. Two key points are worthy of discussion here. Firstly, he argues that the accepted theoretical formulations concerning machine politics, developed most notably by James Wilson and Edward Banfield in relation to urban politics in North America, were developed with reference to a narrow range of social situations which have only marginal reference to Irish political life. In *City Politics* (1965), the two authors built upon the theories Banfield had first outlined in his famous study of village life in southern Italy, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*, well known to anthropology students everywhere, asserting that there were certain key characteristics of a society which led to the emergence of machine politics. These include (among others) the "presence of ethnic or racial cleavages", "clear disparities of wealth", "marked urbanisation" and a situation of "social disorganisation" (Banfield and Wilson 1965: 208). Clearly none of these are applicable to Donegal. Given the paradigmatic context of Irish anthropology in which Sacks was writing in the first part of the 1970s, however, which emphasised the "anomie" and "social disintegration" of western Ireland (documented by, among others, Scheper-Hughes, Messenger and Brody), one might suggest that it would have been relatively easy for Sacks to have argued *with* Banfield and Wilson. The fact that he does not is testimony to the depth of his insight. Sacks asserts instead that the Donegal machine was sustained by the "political culture" of the county, and particularly the belief that politicians were necessary in bridging the gap between the state and the locale. Thus the actual provision of patronage or

⁸⁹ It is notable that Blaney, along with two other independent deputies were provided with a senior civil servant to act as a "liaison officer" between them and the government shortly after the election. According to the *Tirconnail Tribune*,

Deputy Blaney...would not comment on reports that the three independents were now in a position to wield more power and influence than ordinary members of the Fianna Fáil parliamentary party...we understand that the arrangement is but one strand in a complex package worked out with the Taoiseach to ensure that the government has a one seat majority in the Dáil (*Tirconnail Tribune* 4th. November 1997).

brokerage favours was far less important than a general assumption that it occurred. Of equal importance was the ideological appeal of the Fianna Fáil party, which tapped into the republican sentiments held by the majority of the electorate.

The political culture that supported machine politics grew out of real historical and economic conditions in Donegal...[I]t is exactly the presence of such 'real' conditions which have blinded us in the past to the importance of political culture as a factor in machine maintenance...Given the presence of a political culture supportive of machine politics (such as exists in Donegal), there can be a much wider variation in the other contextual characteristics of political machines than heretofore stipulated (ibid.: 212).

The author's second point is also highly relevant for the subject matter of the present study. Sacks contends that the primary effect of the Donegal machine has been to suppress any collectivist demands on the state which might have otherwise emerged in its absence. In this way, the political hegemony has been partly responsible for the creation of a particularistic mode of development, founded on territorial and communal association, and has therefore effectively maintained the gap between the state and local people. The data presented in this study corroborate such a view. In villages such as Drumkeen, Ramelton and St. Johnston, we saw how local people persistently rationalised the "underdevelopment" of their areas in terms of the "neglect" of the County Council, which they perceived as arising from the fact that local politicians did not reside in the immediate vicinity. We also noted how there was a general tendency for voluntary activists to compare the level of development of their own areas with those nearby. In this respect, the activities of the EU in Donegal assume an even greater significance. Not only have new structures been put in place which represent a challenge to the established political order, but the focus of their activities are no longer based predominantly upon an areal paradigm; horizontal ties of association, based upon gender, age or socio-economic status are assigned equal importance in the ethos of the majority of EU programmes currently operating in the county. The evidence indicates that, whilst local people have experienced severe difficulties adjusting to what is, effectively, a new mode of development, they are learning to by-pass the traditional routes in order to

gain access to agents of the state. Many of the development groups discussed in this study are no longer negotiating with politicians in their efforts to secure resources for their own communities, as they had done in the past, but are dealing directly with the development officers of EU programmes.

Having said this, however, the local politician's role is far from being eclipsed in the Donegal of the late 1990s. While Ireland may have altered around them, local politicians continue to occupy an important niche in the development process for many local people, and, as long as the "gap" between the priorities of the State and the needs of the locale remains, they will continue to function as a bridge between the two arenas. In this, as well as in many other respects, it is clear that the Fianna Fáil party in Donegal did not "finally collapse" in the early 1970s. Although now represented by two parties, it continues to exert the same degree of political leverage as it has done for much of this century, with the loss of Fine Gael's seat at the 1997 general election- held continuously by only two deputies since 1927⁹⁰- a lasting testimony to the power of the "Mafia" in North East Donegal. As Sacks points out in the final paragraph of his book,

...the value of patronage seems unlikely to erode...Nor is the premium placed on the personalised access to government which Donegal politicians provide likely to disappear. More likely to pass in the long run is the belief in the special efficacy such access entails. But this last belief, with all its conservative consequences, is apt to fade quite slowly so long as politicians play the political game as if the imaginary were true (ibid.: 225).

⁹⁰ Namely, Daniel McMenamin between 1927 and 1961, and Paddy Harte between 1961 and 1997 (cf. Sacks: 64).

Chapter Eight.

Conclusions.

This study has examined the relationship between three distinctive sectors involved in the development process in County Donegal. In utilising an extended case-study approach, we have highlighted their responses to the changing context of development in Ireland, and detailed their very different experiences to the challenges and opportunities presented by EU funding programmes. These responses are rooted in social action, and are framed by the discourses of development characteristic of each. If Eipper's contention that "micro-scale analyses are only macro analyses on a small scale" (1986: 3) is to be believed, then the data presented here have implications which extend far beyond the boundaries of Donegal.

For much of this century, anthropology has largely neglected the importance of both public policy and local development for conditioning the patterns of social life in Ireland. The model of the bounded rural community described by Arensberg and Kimball and their intellectual descendents provided little scope for explorations of the way in which local people were connected to wider structures and influences, and hence considerations of the role of the state, and more recently the EU, in articulating such linkages have remained absent from most anthropological texts. This represents a serious omission from the ethnographic record, and tends to support Drudy's assertion that "the categories used to describe [Irish society]...are themselves social constructs", which reflect the "domain assumptions" of researchers themselves (1995: 295). The history of local development in western Ireland- for decades the favoured location for anthropological fieldwork- is a long one, and organisations such as Muintir na Tíre, Defence of the West and the Gaeltacht Co-operatives were all active during the period when many of the principal anthropologists of the century (such as Scheper-Hughes, Messenger, Shanklin, Brody and Fox) conducted their fieldwork. One can only assume that development activity was ignored either because it was incompatible with the idea of a self-regulating functionalist idyll, or, in later scholarship, because it tended to undermine the view that rural Ireland was, in Wilson's words "going to hell in a handbasket" (1994: 6). The fact that the subject matter of one of the most recent ethnographies to be published in Ireland,

by Carles Salazar in 1996, is concerned exclusively with co-operative agricultural work in eastern Galway is perhaps testament to the endurance of a paradigm which has tended to prioritise the rural over the urban, the west over the east, and the "traditional" over the "modern" .

Of course, this author could reasonably be accused of subscribing to this paradigm himself. After all, I chose Donegal for this study, as opposed to Meath, Kildare or Wicklow, I lived in a village for much of my fieldwork period, and many of the community groups I worked with were based in rural areas. However, in my defence, I would argue that, although I have drawn from the ethnographic record, I have examined different themes than most of my predecessors. In so doing, I hope to have provided a contribution to a "new" anthropology of Ireland, one which adopts as a starting point a recognition of the dynamism of "local communities", and is more concerned with social change than historical reconstruction.

Although there has been a growing interest in development-related issues on both sides of the border in recent years, publications in this area remain sparse. With the exception of Eileen Kane's now dated study of Gaeltacht industrialisation, the volumes edited by Donnan and McFarlane are the only major Irish anthropological texts which are concerned directly with public policy, and all of their contributions are about the North.¹ This reflects the rather problematic relationship which has prevailed historically between anthropologists and professionals, a relationship which is apparently no different in Ireland to most other areas of the industrialised world (with the possible exception of Scandinavia). However, anthropology undoubtedly has much to offer the policy making community; as McLaughlin has perceptively observed:

The unique contribution of anthropology to policy research is its attention to competing perspectives and conflicts of interests between social groups both in the formulation of policy and in the impact of policy on the meanings of procedures of "everyday" life, an attention made possible both by its methods of data collection and by its theoretical base (1989: 64).

¹ c.f Donnan and McFarlane (1989, 1997).

Whilst there is much evidence that the situation is changing, due in part to the increasing employment opportunities available for anthropologists outside the academy (and, perhaps, the diminishing opportunities within it), as well as the number of anthropologists now engaged in “applied” research, the potential of the discipline is far from being fully realised at the present time. One might suggest that anthropologists, if they are to retain their relevance in the world, must be prepared to engage more readily with policy-makers, not least in order “to stop geographers, economists and others from doing our work by default” (Sillitoe 1993: 597). With these observations in mind, I intend to draw some of the disparate themes of this study together by examining the utility of the foregoing data for the understanding of a recent initiative aimed at reforming the local government system in Ireland, an exercise which may serve to support McLaughlin’s claims.

* * * *

In December 1996, the Irish government published a White Paper entitled *Better Local Government: A Programme For Change*. This represented the culmination of a process which had begun in 1995, when the government appointed a Devolution Commission to examine the future of local authorities in the context of their increasingly marginalised position viz-a-viz EU-funded local development. The Interim Report of this body was submitted to the government in 1996, and drew heavily upon a report issued by the Department of the Environment earlier in the same year (KPMG 1996). In noting the appearance of a plethora of structures to facilitate local development in Ireland over the previous decade, the latter study recommended that responsibility for all “community development” functions, including those held by Partnership and LEADER groups, as well as County Enterprise Boards, should be given over to local authorities (Harvey 1997: 7). The White Paper incorporated the conclusions of both of these reports, outlining a long term strategy whose overall aim was to amalgamate the local government and local development systems in order to enhance the role of county councillors while streamlining the approach to local development. This was to be achieved through the creation of new committee structures within local authorities (replacing the ad hoc structures currently in existence²), bringing together councillors with members of specific interest groups to

² For examples from Donegal, see chapter seven, note 15.

develop policy and monitor council activities.

Specifically, the document envisaged the formation of a Corporate Policy Group within each council, which would take over the role of existing County Strategy Groups and would be charged with overall policy-making within the authority. This would be supplemented by the establishment of a number of Strategic Policy Committees constituted on a partnership basis and reporting directly to the full council, covering the three major existing council functions of roads, planning/environment and housing, together with community and enterprise development. The body responsible for the latter- the Community and Enterprise Group- would draw 50% of its membership from all existing local development bodies, and would be responsible for co-ordinating the appointment of a paid director of community and enterprise development in each county, as well as the integration of the two systems.

The publication of this document caused widespread consternation among the professional development sector in Donegal (and, indeed, nationally). As we have seen, the structures which have been created to administer EU-sponsored development in Ireland have largely by-passed the local political arena, and the idea that this new tier of development would essentially be dismantled and its power transferred to local councillors was something that few in Donegal were prepared to countenance. Although the underlying rationale of the proposals was clearly motivated by the knowledge that Ireland would lose its Objective 1 status after 1999, the European Commission's announcement in early 1997 that the withdrawal of funding would be "phased" over a number of years undermined the case for change for many of those working in development in Donegal. Furthermore, there was hope that the more impoverished areas of the country, where average income levels were still below 75% of the EU average (most notably, the Midlands, West and Border areas) would retain Objective 1 support through the regionalisation of EU aid to Ireland.

In March 1997, the Department of the Taoiseach issued a statement which responded directly to these concerns, stressing that the partnership approach would remain the principal method to facilitate local development activity, and that a commitment to address social exclusion would form a key focus of the new committees. However, the statement appeared to downgrade the

status of *Better Local Government* by referring to it as a “policy document”, not a White Paper (Harvey 1997: 12). Whilst this appeared to be cause for optimism, two publications issued in the last days of the Rainbow Coalition’s term in office- the *National Anti-Poverty Strategy* and the *Green Paper Supporting Voluntary Activity*- both endorsed the need for integration between the local development and local government sectors, to the disappointment of development professionals in Donegal and nationally.

The attitude of the new Fianna Fáil/Progressive Democrat administration to local government reform did not become clear until November 1997, when the re-named Department of the Environment and Local Government issued a set of guidelines to County Councils for the establishment of the Strategic Policy Committees. These were largely similar to those contained in the original document, the only major changes relating to the role of County Strategy Groups, which, the department stated, would be retained in their current form for the time being (DoEaLG 1997: 2), and the number and functions of the SPCs, where decisions would be left up to each County Council (ibid.: inter alia). However, at a conference on local government reform sponsored by the Community Workers’ Co-operative held the following month in Galway, the Minister for the Environment announced that, although the creation of the SPCs would go ahead as planned, the merger of the two systems would be deferred “pending finalisation of the overall renewal programme”³. An Interdepartmental Committee on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems was established by the government in early 1998, which- in inviting submissions from relevant interest groups- represented a further indication that the status of the original document as a White Paper was being progressively abandoned. Meanwhile, local authorities throughout the country began to advertise in the press for the submission of nominations for SPC membership. These advertisements were reported on by the CWC in April 1998, who noted that:

It appears that few, if any, local authorities have engaged in the provision of information for community groups or others around the proposed changes; there appears to be little clarity about the selection process of participants onto the SPCs; few of the advertisements placed clearly state that local authorities do not

³ Noel Dempsey, quoted in the *Irish Times*, 1st. December 1997.

have a role in selecting the nominees from any individual sector, this is matter for the sector itself (CWC 1998: 3).

In the same article, the CWC also stated that “few, if any of the local authorities appear to have consulted with community groups in their area for advice as to how the process should be organised”, and they have failed to “make any reference to the need outlined in the SPC guidelines to ‘foster social inclusiveness and equality’ in line with the principles of the National Anti Poverty Strategy or to ensure ‘gender balance, in particular, the need to attract participation by women’” (ibid.). From the perspective of this organisation, at least, the process of reform was already appearing to marginalise the “community/voluntary” sector.⁴

The report of the Interdepartmental Committee was published in June 1998. In asserting that the “ability of local authorities to provide a balanced contribution to local social and economic development is currently very weak”, and therefore they are not in a position to take on the role of local development organisations⁵, it was clearly a watered-down version of the radical changes envisaged by the Devolution Commission and encapsulated in the White Paper. However, whilst cautioning against the wholesale transfer of local development functions to local authorities, the report suggested that new City and County Development Boards be established to co-ordinate all development activity. These would be “independent bodies operating under the umbrella of local government”⁶. Most worryingly for the development sector, the report gave no commitment to maintain partnership boards in their present form after the end of the 1999.

At the time of writing, the future of local government reform in Ireland remains uncertain. The regime which emerges will clearly be dependent upon the outcome of the EU’s Agenda 2000 negotiations during 1999, along with the structure of the new National Development Plan (2000-2006). What is clear, however, is that given the scaling down of the share of Structural Funds Ireland receives, together with the momentum that has been generated by the policy initiatives discussed above, some form of amalgamation is

⁴ Similar reservations were expressed by the Community Directors’ Forum (see chapter four, note 32) and Irish Rural Link (1998: 4).

⁵ Government of Ireland 1998, cited in Curley 1999: 1.

⁶ ibid.: 2.

inevitably going to take place between the two sectors.

The data contained in this study have clear implications for how this might work out in practice. As we have seen, local politicians and the professional development sector operate in well-defined social ambits which overlap only rarely; their understanding of the meaning of and processes of development are also highly dichotomous. Indeed, a comparison of the attitudes of politicians and professional actors towards development can be meaningfully constructed as a series of binary oppositions, which serve to highlight the social divisions which are apparent between them.

Politicians	:	Professionals
Male	:	Female
Private	:	Public
Individualism	:	Collectivism
Personalism	:	Neutrality
Conservatism	:	Socialism/Liberalism
Catholicism	:	Secularism
Tradition	:	Modernity
Development as aid	:	Development as emancipation
Ireland/Donegal	:	Europe

Naturally, this is a gross abstraction, and does not take into account differences within each group: the true picture is one characterised by a spectrum, rather than polarised opposition. However, in terms of the social nexus within which each group operates, which gives rise to each distinctive, and competitive discourse, this series of contrasting viewpoints does indeed have saliency. As we remarked in chapter three, it serves to root individuals into a set of methods and ways of action which are manifested in the fragmented institutional regime characteristic of local development in Ireland in the late 1990s.

This serves to bring into question the degree to which the two sectors will be able to work in harness in the future. As we have seen, the spur for the creation of the new structures to facilitate EU development in Ireland has been rooted in a profound dissatisfaction with the way local government

operates on the part of professional development actors, and from their perspective, the amalgamation of the two sectors will remove a principal *raison d'être* for the existence of this sub-county tier of local development administration. Furthermore, despite its shallow history in comparison to the local government system, EU development in Ireland is already firmly established, and any attempt to subsume the distinctive identity of this sector under the auspices of county councils is likely to be met by profound resistance by those whose livelihoods ultimately rely upon it. Finally, it seems that the previous attempt by the government to bring the two sectors together through the establishment of the County Strategy Group system has only served to exacerbate the extent of their separation in Donegal by confirming the strongly held views of each sector about the other, something which does not bode well for a further extension of co-operation between them.

Having said this, however, the claims of development professionals to be acting from a position of moral superiority in supposedly establishing mechanisms through which representatives operate in a neutral manner for the benefit of the populace as whole- as opposed to political representatives, who are, from their perspective, only interested in the votes of a few individuals- may also be questioned. As we have seen, the principal axis around which the tensions between the two sectors has coalesced is related to community representation, and specifically the distinction between participative and elective democracy. EU-sponsored local development in Ireland is widely recognised to have provided the spur for the growth of participative democracy throughout the country: in the White Paper, for example, the government acknowledged that:

...the empowerment of local communities involved in [local development structures] has enabled them to take responsibility for their own affairs in an important exercise in participative democracy (ibid.: 29).

In the discourse of the professional development sector, participative democracy is increasingly being used as an adjunct to other, more established terms, such as bottom-up development and social inclusion. In the CWC's report of the LGR conference referred to above, Fahy defines participative democracy in the following way:

Participative democracy is concerned with how unequal distribution of power and resources affects peoples' daily lives and how they can influence decision making which affects them. Participative democracy implies that the power to make decisions should not be left to a small number of people, but that power should be more equally shared among all citizens, so that everyone has an opportunity to influence collective affairs. The concern of participative democrats is to achieve a more egalitarian redistribution of power and greater democratisation of the political process at both national and local level (CWC 1998: 3).⁷

The case studies presented in this study suggest that this view of participative democracy is manifestly at odds with the experience of EU development activity in Donegal. In establishing a new tier of local administration which operates independently from the county council, EU development has clearly altered the way in which local people are connected to agents of the state. However, the new structures which have been established during the past five years have largely failed to distribute power more evenly among the population of the county. We have noted that the DLDC contains no representation from "disadvantaged groups", the intended "targets" of one of the programmes (the LDP) which the company is responsible for; instead, the board of management is controlled by a relatively small group of people who may be classed as belonging to the economic elite of the county, either through their business activities or their occupational roles. In this sense, then, there has been little diffusion of power. If anything, the position of two of the three elements of Eipper's "Ruling Trinity" (business interests and the state) appears to have been strengthened through EU development funding. Thus the professional development sector could reasonably be accused of over-emphasising their claims to be providing an enhanced level of representation of the "community" in comparison to local politicians: from the perspective of the latter, the perceived lack of a "democratic mandate" on the part of those involved in the administration of EU programmes is reason enough for their removal from the scene.

⁷ A similar view of participative democracy is provided by Crowley and Watt:

Participative democracy promotes collective forms of organisation and collective rights with participation as a key principle. They offer a challenging alternative to western structures not only in terms of political process but also in their insistence that democracy cannot be confined to the political sphere but must be rooted in the manner in which the economy itself is structured (1992: 94).

This problem has been compounded by the way “partnership” has been conceived and applied in Donegal. We noted in chapter four how the term “community representative” is generally used in a self-referential manner, and questioned the degree to which the individuals who make up part of this sector on the board of the DLDC can genuinely claim to be acting in the interests of the people they purport to represent in their own area.

There is much evidence to suggest that this interpretation of “partnership” mirrors the national situation, where the involvement of “social partners”, the “community sector” and state actors, is being increasingly recognised as the major paradigm in which government policy making is conducted. There has, however, been little critical appreciation at a national or EU level of what the “community sector” actually means, beyond an assumption that its representatives will necessarily act on behalf of the “disadvantaged” within their own area. In the guidelines issued to local authorities for the establishment of the SPCs, for example, six sectors, members of which are to be invited to sit on the committees, are identified, namely: development/construction, business/commercial, Trade Union, agriculture/farming, environment/conservation/culture, and community/voluntary/disadvantaged. In this formulation, local voluntary and community groups would appear to have no interest in conservation, environmental, cultural or developmental issues, something that many, if not most, groups in Donegal would vigorously dispute. Moreover, the latter term (community/voluntary/disadvantaged) appears throughout the document, and nowhere are its three components referred to separately or considered anything but coterminous and mutually-reinforcing. As was emphasised in chapter three, the problematic equation of “community” with “poverty” reveals the highly simplistic manner in which the former concept is envisaged in EU and Irish documentation relating to development policy, one which bears little relationship to the reality of social organisation at local levels. And, most significantly perhaps, the national representatives of the “community sector” itself could reasonably be accused of utilising an identical model of community in championing the cause of “participative democracy”.

This analysis highlights the dangers associated with the use of terms which serve to package social complexity under all-encompassing blanket “labels”.

As was emphasised in chapter one, a number of development anthropologists working outside Europe have noted that the discourse characteristic of development planning within multinational agencies often serves as a bureaucratic veneer, as a means of subjugating reality, and acts to suppress the voices of those who have been identified as “targets” for aid. This study suggests that, in the way that its development discourse has been interpreted and applied in Ireland, similar criticisms may be levelled at the EU. Terms such as “bottom up development”, “devolution”, “subsidiarity”, “empowerment”, “social inclusion”, even “partnership” itself, all convey highly positive connotations of the incorporation of “local people” into the development process. However, the image which the use of such labels seeks to construct is by no means fully borne out by the reality of development practice as it has been experienced in Donegal. Instead, the picture which emerges is one characterised by an incommensurability between the methodologies of development agencies and the understanding of the development process on the part of the populations whom their activities are supposedly designed to help.

This latter observation represents one of the most important conclusions which may be extracted from the foregoing data, and demonstrates the value of applying an “anthropological gaze” to the understanding of local development and development policy.

* * * *

At the outset of this study, it was stated that we would seek to extend the anthropological scholarship of the European Union. It was also suggested that an examination of the implementation of EU structural funding programmes in Ireland, such as the LEADER or LDP initiatives, may reveal much about the praxis of European integration as it is occurring at the present time. Whilst we have considered the practical dimensions of EU-sponsored local development in detail, we have not, as yet, mapped out the implications of these findings for the changing relationship between the locale, the state and the EU. In the final section of this chapter, then, we move beyond the boundaries of Donegal, by providing some tentative observations concerning the way in which the EU may be affecting the context of national policy-making in Ireland.

In chapter four, it was noted how many people in Donegal regard the distribution of EU grants to be subject to personalistic influences, an opinion based in large measure on the lack of "democratic accountability" within EU development agencies. However, if one accepts the vociferous claims of the employees and board members of such agencies, that they do not, in Sacks' words "operate along the lines of influence and intrigue" (1976: 7), then it is possible to identify ways in which the inner workings of this new administrative tier differs from that of its *bête noir*, the political establishment. The work of Adshead on the national and EU policy-making context is extremely useful in this regard. She has conducted a study examining the responses of three agricultural interest groups, namely the Irish Farmers' Organisation, the Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association and the Irish Co-operative Society, to the "Europeanisation" of government policy-making in Ireland. Her work draws on the concept on "policy communities" developed by the political scientists Marsh and Rhodes (1992) and Smith (1992) in relation to the U.K., which she defines as:

...an exclusive system of consultation which reflects on the one hand, personalised relations between interest groups and the civil service and, on the other, the segmentation of policy-making into separate policy community [sic] (1996: 595).⁸

Adshead argues that the traditional relationship between the three organisations and government departments, based upon clientelism, personalism and brokerage, has altered significantly as Irish policy-making has become welded to that of the European Commission. The author suggests that:

...in relation to Irish agricultural policy making, the changed circumstances which have arisen as a consequence of Irish EC membership now renders [an] approach [which emphasises the importance of personalism and brokerage] out-of-date. Ireland's membership of the EC changed the parameters of political activity and superimposed a set of procedures and protocols...on to pre-

⁸ In what is perhaps a clearer definition, Rhodes et al argue that

a policy community exists when a network has few members, all of whom command needed resources, and when either economic or professional actors dominate...The basic relationship in a policy community is one of resource exchange and these exchanges produce interdependence, which is further strengthened by frequent and persistent interaction and shared core policy values (1996: 370).

existing national norms of political behaviour. The imposition of an external agency (the EC institutions) guaranteeing this mode of political behaviour was not without consequence: it effectively gave *formal* recognition to the dominant farming interest groups studied. As a consequence, their relationship with government changed from being one which was relatively fluid, informal and personalised, to one which was largely static, co-operative, organised and structured. Essentially, what was previously an *informal clientelistic* set of relations between policy actors, *developed* into a *formally established closed policy community* (1996: 604, all emphasis in original).

These observations are useful for our own analysis since, if Adshead is correct, her research indicates that one of the primary effects of EU influence on Irish agricultural policy-making has been to “neutralise” the context in which it occurs. No longer are interest groups reliant upon clientelistic ties with civil servants; instead, a new policy regime has developed in which the influence of external actors is based upon more formal procedures, allowing the Irish government “to assume the role of independent arbiter between interests, and quickly assert a policy consensus” (ibid.: 604).

One might suggest that similar conclusions can be applied to the introduction of EU programmes in Ireland. At various points in this study, we have remarked on the “project-led” nature of development funding, and the degree to which the process relies upon community groups adopting a pro-active stance in relation to drawing down funds from Brussels. In this way, development agencies operate essentially as “service providers”, distributing funding according to which groups approach them, rather than on the basis of decisions made “behind closed doors”. From the perspective of the employees of EU agencies, their *modus operandi* is therefore opposed to the personalised and clientelistic behaviour which characterises the political sphere, something exemplified by the comments reproduced in chapter four, and stressed throughout the study.

Moreover, there is much evidence that this trend reflects a change which has occurred across the country as a whole. Adshead uses the concept of the “closed policy community” to describe the establishment of various discrete

channels of interaction between agricultural interest groups, civil servants in the Department of Agriculture in Dublin and EU officials working for the European Commission in Brussels. In chapter four, it was suggested that each agency represented on the ground in Donegal functions within a distinctive bureaucratic “culture”, manifested in terms of the rules and regulations associated with each programme, as well as the personal contacts which professional actors have with their respective overseeing authorities outside the county. In reviewing the history of EU development in Ireland in chapter three, it was noted how, in 1992, the government established a separate body, ADM Ltd., to manage the partnerships established as part of the Programme for Economic and Social Progress. The body now has responsibility for the LDP, as well as various other funding programmes (most notably those stemming from the PRP and the National Childcare Strategy), and as such, is the most important state agency for the management of EU-funded local development activity. ADM’s role as a conduit between the EU and partnerships on the ground suggests that it could reasonably be viewed as a key element in the “closed policy community” which serves to bind together the various tiers in the system. As part of this research, I interviewed a senior official from this organisation, who stressed the degree of interaction which the company has with civil servants from the EU:

We have very regular contact with the European Commission. We have meetings with each of their monitoring committees, an average of three to four times a year with each, and we have constant contact with them on particular issues /.../ We would have very good contacts with three of the directorates there, one that looks after the ERDF, the other that looks after the ESF and the other one is the auditing directorate.

Later in the interview, the official expanded on the nature of contact which ADM has with the EU:

We say to all groups, if you want to make a case for eligibility, make a case to us about which target groups it meets, and then we will then address that and get a decision from Brussels. That happens a fair bit.

As well as these direct contacts, it appears that the movement towards a “closed policy community” is reflected in the independent status of ADM, which serves to shield it from any political influence or interference:

I think the real underlying strategy behind the independence is to keep us totally apolitical. We’re outside the political arena, and we’re not subject to any kind of influence by any minister of TD, and that’s the crucial benefit of independence.

/.../

Decisions on the selection of groups [to manage the LDP at local levels] are decided by the main board, and then an appraisal process involving an independent evaluator from outside the company would give an independent view to balance that coming from the board itself. And it’s worked quite well- it hasn’t attracted any flak from the media or the political arena.

/.../

From the point of view of the European Commission, this arrangement has attractions, keeping financial intermediaries away from the political side of things. I think they have a higher level of comfort working through us [than government departments].

The similarities between this type of argument and that utilised by the professional sector in Donegal to justify their decision to exclude politicians from their administrative arrangements are manifest, and would appear to support Adshead’s views.⁹ One might contend, therefore, that the situation which has emerged in Donegal is a microcosmic illustration of the tensions which characterise the European project in Ireland as a whole.

The similarities, however, do not stop here: perhaps even more significantly, officials in Dublin are faced with apparently identical constraints in managing funding as are groups in Donegal. It is worth comparing the following comments, taken from the same interview, with those of the W.E.A.V.E. group detailed in chapter five:

⁹ This particular official also emphasised the level of auditing which ADM is subject to, which involves a total of five annual audits undertaken by the Comptroller and Auditor General, the Department of the Taoiseach, the ERDF and ESF auditing departments in Brussels and the European Commission’s “value for money” audit. The three EU audits also involve scrutiny of the partnership groups around the country. In his words,

It’s probably the most involved part of the programme...and maybe that’s not such a bad thing, because you’re dealing a lot of the time with people who are working on voluntary basis, who may not have an administrative background or knowledge of controls or accounting procedures that you need to have in place.

PC: How does the funding process with Brussels work? I presume you have to put in a claim each year...?

--: Yes, it's a major pain. The EU funding, you have certain drawdown targets- certain expenditure targets- which you have to meet before you can draw down the next sum. What happens is, you draw down the first 80% in 33% blocks, and then when that's finished, you can draw down the last 20%. Which means that you have a constant cash-flow difficulty. We have had problems with the bank overdraft, because you're spending the money ahead of getting it all the time. We're an agency that deals exclusively with EU funding, and therefore we don't have any funds which we can use to cover our shortage of cash flow, so it's a real problem for us.

Further interviews conducted with senior officials from the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Enterprise and Employment, together with the head of the ESF section in the Department of Finance, indicate that the way ADM operates is reflected across the whole governmental arena. Development agencies in Donegal may therefore be viewed as the furthestmost extension of a model of development which is controlled, not from Dublin, but from the European Commission in Brussels. This observation apparently corroborates Peter's assertion that

...many policy communities or networks appear to exert great influence, if not control, over public policy, more than in most national governments in Europe (1992: 81).

From this perspective, the EU's development regime in Ireland represents perhaps the clearest example of European integration in action, and a manifestation of what Held has characterised as the "hollowing out of the nation state". The government's recent efforts to reform the local government system therefore becomes understandable as an attempt to re-gain control of local development in Ireland by opening up a "policy community" which appears to have become increasingly impervious to the influence of politicians.

* * * *

But what of the “local community”, the primary subject matter of Irish ethnography? In contrasting the modes of development characteristic of the political and professional sectors in the county, we have stressed how the introduction of the EU funding programmes has necessitated an adjustment on the part of local voluntary groups in the ways in which they negotiate their relationship with agents of the state. However, whilst the brokerage role of the politician and the priest is gradually being usurped by the development officer of EU development agencies, the evidence presented here suggests that a concomitant shift in the attitude of local people to the new bureaucratic regime has yet to occur. As witnessed by the meeting in Newtoncunningham described in chapter six, people continue to set store in the value of personal contacts and relationships in their dealings with those with control over resources, and tend to treat development professionals as they would any local councillor. This is a testimony, perhaps, to the enduring strength of the “political culture” in Donegal, so eloquently described by Paul Sacks. The attitude is also manifested in the way in which the activities of development agencies themselves are viewed. The paucity of information concerning EU funding in the locale means that a prior relationship between individuals involved in community groups and the employees or board members of EU agencies is usually crucial in the initial stages of project planning: in all but one of the cases considered in this study, groups were in touch with the funding agency through personal contact. (The exception here is the W.E.A.V.E. group, which itself found out about the NOW initiative through a friend of one of its members). This factor is reason enough alone for many to suspect that the distribution of grants is affected by personal influence, a view compounded by the problematic application of “participative democracy” by EU agencies in the county.

Having said this, however, one can also assert with confidence that- despite the problems associated with the development discourse of the EU, despite the general absence of popular participation in development administration, despite the lack of information available to local people, and despite the difficulties associated with managing EU funds- the EU has still had a significant impact upon local development in Donegal. For perhaps the first time in the history of the state, voluntary development groups are beginning to discover that their “peripheral[ity] to the concerns of the power-brokers of the age” (to quote Fr. Curran) is being reversed, and that their concerns,

needs and aspirations are finally being addressed by an external organisation. The list of community groups in Donegal which have received funding from the EU, presented as an Appendix to this study, is lengthy, and growing, and should not be overlooked. Moreover, the largely positive experiences of the associations in Drumkeen, St. Johnston, Convoy and Kilmacrennan are being repeated throughout Ireland, as people learn to respond to the new opportunities which EU aid has brought. This is something which belies the commonly-held view that community development continues to be solely motivated by

...a sense of alienation from centralised power structures, particularly since the focus of centralisation has been shifting to even higher level structures with the formation and subsequent evolution of the EEC (Breathnach 1986: 78).

An emphasis upon the practical dimensions of EU funding- and its associated problems- should not blind us to the fact that the ideologies of development of the EU and the locale are, in essence, marked by a significant degree of overlap. The ethic of bottom up development has found many parallels in the locale, where voluntarism has long provided a broad infrastructural base for the galvanisation of development activity, in all its various guises. The co-operative movement of the early years of the century and Father McDyer's experiments in Glencolumbkille, along with the efforts of numerous other unsung local activists, represent the antecedents of the community groups considered in this study. Indeed, as was suggested in chapter three, there is evidence to suggest that the model of community development in western Ireland, rooted in the rural traditions of agricultural co-operation and motivated by the historical neglect of successive national governments and policy makers, has itself been influential in moulding the current approach of the EU.

In this respect, the portrait of Irish rural life which emerges from the pages of many of the "classic" ethnographic texts of the post-war era does not correspond to the image depicted here. Whilst many of the localities which we have considered in this study are suffering from economic impoverishment, this is not to suggest that they are in any way "dying". On the contrary, beneath the sleepy exterior of villages such as Kilmacrennan,

Newtoncunningham and St. Johnston, there exists a remarkably vibrant strata of community life which is testament to the resilience of the people of Donegal to the economic pressures which they are faced with. The level of voluntary activity in the county thus belies the view of the "necrographers" of the past (to borrow Peace's term), who, in lamenting the disappearance of some of the more "exotic" characteristics of social organisation in western Ireland, missed one of its most important features.

Viewed from this perspective, then, the far north-west of the Republic of Ireland is manifestly not a "peripheral" region. On the contrary, the issues which we have considered lie at the very heart of determining the future direction of European integration, and the "new" Europe which emerges from this process will in large measure be a product of what happens in places like County Donegal. In this study, I hope to have gone some way towards demonstrating the veracity of this claim.

Appendix One.

A Methodological Note.

This study is based predominantly upon participant observation conducted with a number of development groups in county Donegal during 1997. Although most of these appear as case-studies in the study, there are also a number of other groups with whom I developed a relationship in the fieldwork period. These include Action Inishowen, the Broadroad Group (Convoy), the Glenboe Action Group, IRDL and IRD Milford. These data were supplemented by a total of 127 extended interviews with people working in the development sector in Donegal and Derry City, as well as parish priests, county councillors, executive officers of the Donegal County Council and Letterkenny UDC, and four senior civil servants from government departments in Dublin. 102 different people were interviewed; i.e. 25 repeat interviews were conducted. 34 of the interviews were taped, and, of these, 26 were transcribed. The interviews lasted between half an hour and three hours, with an average length of one hour.

Breakdown of Interviews, by category:

Category	Number of Interviews Conducted ¹	
	In Donegal	Outside Donegal
Voluntary Groups	19	1
Sectoral Interest Groups	9	0
Local Politicians	16	0
County/Urban Council Employees	6	0
EU Agencies	9	5
State Agencies/Govt. Departments	10	5
Others ²	21	1

With the exception of “public figures” (county councillors, T.D.s, and parish priests), all personal names have been changed in order to protect the anonymity of informants. Place-names mentioned in the study are real, and

¹ Note: the numbers given include interviews with different people working for the same organisation, but do not include repeat interviews.

² Others: credit union officials (4), parish priests (4), businesspeople (3), journalists (3), farmers (2), RTC employees (2), chairman of fishermen’s co-op (1), health worker (1), manager of language school (1), theatre manager (1).

there has been no attempt to disguise the names of the various development groups and companies mentioned. In order to convey to the reader an impression of how the fieldwork was conducted, I present below a “reflexive” account of my experiences during the year I spent in the county.

I first arrived in Donegal on the morning of the 7th. January 1997, following an arduous drive through the night from my parents house in Yorkshire and an extremely rough sea-crossing from Cairnryan to Larne. My feelings as I crossed the border on the outskirts of Derry were comprised of a mixture of trepidation and excitement: I was leaving the U.K. and friends, family and colleagues for twelve months, to live in a county I had visited only once before- for less than a week during the previous summer- in order undertake a research project that I had been planning for the best part of two years. I was about to become a true anthropologist, to embark on the rite of passage which divides the “amateur” from the “professional”. Would I be able to live up to this responsibility? Would I be able to establish relationships with people in the county? Would I generate meaningful data? Above all, would I be accepted as an Englishman in Donegal, perhaps the most nationalist county in Ulster?

My first destination was Fintown, a small, isolated street village in the heart of the Donegal Gaeltacht, where I had arranged, on my previous visit, to rent a small cottage for two weeks. In August, the setting had seemed idyllic, surrounded by high mountains, lush moorland and sparkling streams feeding a large lake in the bottom of the valley. Although I did not intend to stay in the area, wishing to base myself in the east of the county, Fintown had appealed to me as an initial base because it was in the area where the anthropologist Eugenia Shanklin had conducted her fieldwork in the 1970s for her book *Donegal's Changing Traditions*. On the morning of my arrival in January, however, the contrast in the scenery from that of the previous summer could not have been more stark. Everything was covered with a heavy dusting of snow, the lake was frozen and the tops of the Bluestack mountains were obscured in cloud. The cottage itself was located about three miles from Fintown in an area known as Lough Muc, and as my ancient Skoda bumped and skidded along the road from the village, which amounted to little more than a veneer of broken tarmac across the moorland, I became seriously concerned as to whether the suspension of the heavily-

loaded car would hold out until I arrived at my destination.

I had telephoned the owner of the cottage the night before, and he had assured me that someone would either be there to meet me or would leave the key under a post by the gate. I hoped the latter would be the case, as I had only managed to snatch an hour of fitful sleep on the ferry, felt extremely dishevelled and had no desire to enter into conversation with a stranger. However, upon entering the cottage, I was surprised and somewhat disappointed to find an elderly lady attempting to light the large range in the kitchen. She greeted me warmly, and apologised profusely for "not having everything ready", despite the fact that my arrival was half-an-hour earlier than I had anticipated in the conversation of the night before. Her friendly, almost motherly manner, made me feel immediately at ease, and after about five minutes in her company, I began to feel very glad that she was there. After helping me to unload my luggage from the car, she left at about 10.30 in order to "give me a bit a privacy", but not before inviting me to her own house, situated nearby, "for my breakfast". I had a wash and a shave, re-stoked the range with peats from the shed outside, and then walked down the road. Despite my rather disorientated state-of-mind, and general lack of hunger, the breakfast I ate on that first morning in Mrs. Tummeny's kitchen was one of the most memorably experiences of my entire fieldwork period. As I attempted to make in-roads into the enormous pile of sausages, bacon, eggs and home-made bread that had been placed in front of me, I explained my project to her. She knew all about the LEADER II programme, as it had financed the building of a new steam railway which was to run along the shores of Lough Finn towards the town of Ardrara about fifteen miles away, and expressed scepticism as to whether the EU in general was helping the people of the area. She also told me about the Fintown Development Association, and offered to introduce me to some of the people involved in it. She herself was a retired farmer's wife, whose husband had died three years previously, and the farm, consisting of 500 sheep and some cattle, was now being managed by one of her sons. She had visited England only once, when she was a girl, but "didn't like it very much" and had spent all of her life in Lough Muc. We talked for over two hours, and I as made my way back up the hill to my own cottage (after promising to buy her some jars of marmalade from the shop in Fintown later that afternoon), I felt extremely cheered by the warmth and kindness of this welcome, as well as

by the fact that I was already gathering information for my research, albeit unintentionally, within a morning of arriving in Ireland.

I drove back down the bumpy track to Fintown, telephoned my parents and girlfriend from the public phone in the village, and bought a local newspaper and the marmalade from the well-stocked shop. After dropping the marmalade off at Mrs. Tummeny's, I returned to the cottage and slept until early evening. Unable to pick up a signal on the radio I had brought with me, and contemplating the lack of heat emanating from the peat fire smouldering in the hearth of the front room, I spent the rest of the evening in one of the two pubs in Fintown in the company of the barman and one other customer, where I wrote up my fieldwork diary and perused the pages of the Donegal Democrat. A large advertisement in the newspaper provided me with my first "break" as an anthropologist: it was for a public launch of a new "Enterprise Information Service" which was being set up by the County Strategy Group in Donegal, to be held in the Mount Errigal hotel in Letterkenny on the 10th. January. It was to be attended by all the major EU development agencies operating in the county, as well as local politicians and the County Manager. As I lay in bed that night, I reflected on the events of the past twenty-four hours, and the unexpected, but highly auspicious beginning to my year in Donegal.

The next few days were spent writing postcards home, travelling around the county and paying frequent visits to Mrs. Tummeny's house to deliver various provisions, and to consume copious quantities of tea, cake and home-made bread which she kindly provided at every opportunity. The event in Letterkenny proved to be invaluable in these early stages of my fieldwork. It gave me a chance to meet the staff of numerous development bodies face-to-face, many of whom (although I was unaware of it then), were to become friends, and I was able to arrange a total of seven formal interviews to be conducted during the forthcoming weeks. As most of the agencies were based in Letterkenny, the event also convinced me of the need to move to the town, and much of the following week was spent looking for accommodation. I eventually took a small room in a shared house in an estate on the edge of the town, and my brief sojourn in the mountains was at an end. It took me a few days to adjust to the contrast between Lough Muc and the Meadowbank Park estate, and on more than one occasion I returned

to Fintown and Mrs. Tummeny's inviting kitchen on the rather dubious pretext of collecting mail from the cottage, even though I had left a forwarding address with her.

After an initial assessment of the types of development activity going on in Letterkenny, I quickly realised that the town should be my base for the year, and set about contacting the remarkable array of development organisations located within it. The people I met were extremely helpful and interested in my research, and I had little difficulty arranging meetings. Interviewees would often refer me to others working in development, and through this "cascading" system of contacts, I was able to conduct over forty interviews during the first ten weeks of my stay. By early Spring, however, I became concerned that I needed to develop my research beyond the constant round of interviewing and note-taking/transcribing which my fieldwork had largely consisted of up to then. Whilst it was interesting meeting new people each day, what I was learning about development in Donegal was increasingly being subject to the law of diminishing returns. If my research was to have any value, I somehow needed to be able to "get behind the office door", to find out what development and the EU meant to those on the inside. Three pieces of good fortune, which all happened within one week in late March, set the course of my research for the remainder of the year and served to place it in on a more anthropological footing.

The first of these occurred when I visited the office of a newly-established body called the Donegal Community Workers Co-operative, a sub-network of a national organisation based in Galway. I knew the staff of the main office through visits I had made to Galway with the Geography Department at Oxford Brookes over the course of three years, and this proved to be a very useful resource when I met the staff of the Letterkenny office for the first time. Without any prompting from myself, they invited me to sit in on their meetings, to attend regular seminars and project launches which they were organising, and generally to participate in their work. I was asked to help compile a data-base of community groups in the area, and later in the year, took the chair and wrote a report for one of their monthly gatherings of community workers in the county. The array of friendships I made with the staff and members of the Co-op, as well as the insight this gave me into the structures of development in Donegal, proved to be of inestimable value

to my research. Very suddenly, my role changed from that of interviewer to participant: I found that people I telephoned to arrange interviews had heard of me or I had met them before at a meeting or event, I began to socialise regularly with people working in the development sector and people even started to recognise me in High Street.

The second “break” occurred when I contacted a local development group in a small village called Drumkeen, about seven miles from Letterkenny, in order to arrange an interview. I was aware that the group had recently received some funding from the LEADER II programme, and was also in the process of applying to the Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. I spoke to Fr. Tom Curran, the chairman of the group, who invited me to meet him at his house in Drumkeen one morning in the following week. It was one of the first warm days of the year in Donegal, and as I pulled up outside the community hall in the village, the weather seemed to be a portent for the upturn in my fortunes as a fieldworker. I knocked on the door of the Parochial House and was invited inside by the priest’s domestic helper, who ushered me into a comfortably-furnished room where a large spread of tea, cakes and biscuits was laid out on a table. Fr. Curran greeted me warmly, and we spent the next two hours talking of my research, and his own vision for development in the village. The development group were in the process of constructing a “Famine Garden” between the Church and the Parochial house, and were organising several events to mark its completion later in the year. He took me outside and showed me proudly around the garden, with its array of dry-stone walls, newly laid lawn, and flowering plants which had been chosen to reflect those growing in the area at the time of the famine. Before I left, Fr. Curran asked me whether I would like to become involved in helping with the project, something to which I enthusiastically agreed. Over the next few months, I attended every fortnightly meeting of the group, and the kindness that the people of the village showed towards me remains a happy and lasting memory of my time in the county.

The third event of early Spring seemed like a setback at first. I was woken early one morning by my landlord, who had come to tell me that he had decided to put the house on the market, and that I needed to find somewhere else to live. After a few days of fruitless searching in Letterkenny, I began to look outside the town’s boundaries, and eventually found accommodation

in a small village located about four miles from the town. The house was actually an old Royal Irish Constabulary Barracks which had been split into two flats, one of the flats being occupied by a young German woman- an architect- who had recently emigrated to Ireland. The place was ideal: the rent was very reasonable (an important consideration given my rather meagre resources), I had my own front room, complete with open fire, and the village was close enough to Letterkenny to enable me still to feel that I was "part of the town". However, living in a village also enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of rural life in Ireland, which I had so far only really experienced from the perspective of half-way up a mountain side in Lough Muc. Although most of the people I met during the first few days of my eight-month stay stressed how "quiet" the place was ("you'd have to go into Letterkenny if you want to see some life"), I discovered that there was an array of voluntary organisations active in the village, including a development association. The architect and my landlady were both members of the committee, and I was invited to participate in the regular meetings that the group held. I also found that it was far easier to get to know people in the village than it had been in the rather impersonal environment of Meadowbank Park, where, like Hervé Varenne, who conducted anthropological research in suburban Dublin, I sometimes questioned the extent to which the place where I was living was different to the environment I had left in England (cf. Varenne 1993: 224). My front room became an accepted venue for "after-pub craic" for a number of people of my own age, most of whom lived with their parents, and- with only one bus per day travelling to Letterkenny- my car was much in demand as a kind of informal taxi service for those without independent transport.

The social relations I developed with both the people living around me in the village as well as those working in the development sector in Donegal during the Spring and early Summer were invaluable from both a personal and professional point-of-view. As well as providing me with an insight into social life in Donegal, these friendships- which I would like to think will be long-lasting- gave me a sense of "belonging" in/to the county which I have greatly missed since my return. Although I have not visited Donegal for over a year, I have remained in contact with many people in the county, and the regular letters that I have received during the intervening period have been extremely important to me in the difficult, and isolating, "writing

up” process. However, I am conscious of the fact that in conducting fieldwork in Ireland, I have subscribed to what has been described as

a particularly inglorious academic paradigm, ‘the outsider does ethnography in Ireland and allows others access to Irish authenticity’ (McVeigh 1992: 176).

In defending myself against such an accusation, I would argue that my chosen research theme is one case where an external perspective is very much required: from my own experience, the fact that I was an outsider was of enormous benefit in my attempt to gain a holistic perspective of the development process in the county. Due to its fragmentary nature, few people in Donegal have the opportunity to develop such a view, and many of my informants in the county specifically asked me to send them copies of relevant chapters for this very reason. Moreover, I am optimistic that the study will be of benefit to the people working in development not only in Donegal, but elsewhere in Ireland. If it has succeeded in this objective, this represents a lasting testament to the friendliness, co-operation and support that was offered to me by the people of Donegal, to whom I shall always remain deeply indebted. In this way, I would like to think that this is their study, as well as my own.

Appendix Two.

Operational Programmes in the CSF 1994-99.

Operational Programme.	Sub-Programmes (No. of Measures).
Agriculture, Rural Development and Forestry	AG1. Structural Improvement and Rural Development (7) AG2. Forestry (3) AG3. Evaluation and T.A. (0).
Economic Infrastructure	EI1. Energy (5) EI2. Communications (2)
Environmental Services	EN1. Water Services (3) EN2. Waste (2) EN3. Coastal Protection (0) EN4. Research and Development (0) EN5. T.A. (0)
Fisheries	No OPs; 10 measures.
Hospital Infrastructure	No Sub-Programmes
Human Resources	HR1. Initial Training and Education (6) HR2. Continuing Training for the Unemployed (2) HR3. Social Exclusion (7) HR4. Adaptation to Industrial Change (2) HR5. Quality of Training (5)
Industrial Development Development	ID1. Indigenous Industry (4) ID2. Inward Investment (2) ID3. Research and Development (4) ID4. Marketing Development (3) ID5. Gaeltacht Development (3) ID6. Development of the Food Industry (5) ID7. Land and Buildings (0) ID8. T.A. (0).
Local, Urban and Rural Development	LU1. Local Enterprise (4) LU2. Integrated development of designated disadvantaged and other areas (2) LU3. Urban and Village Renewal (5) LU4. T.A. (2)

Tourism	TO1. National/Cultural Tourism (3) TO2. Product Development (5) TO3. Marketing (0) TO4. Training (3) TO5. T.A. (0)
Transport	TR1. Supporting National Economic Development (7) TR2. Supporting Sub-Regional Economic Development (4).
CSF technical assistance	No Sub-Programmes

Appendix Three.

EU Community Initiatives 1994-1999.

Name.	Primary Focus.
ADAPT*	Adaptation of workforce to industrial change; promotion of new forms of employment.
EMPLOYMENT: - INTEGRA ¹	Re-integration of the disabled and disadvantaged back into labour market.
- NOW*	Promotion of female participation in workforce.
- YOUTHSTART*	Promotion of youth employment.
INTERREG*	Promotion of cross-border co-operation; aiding re-development of isolated border regions.
KONVER	Promotion of co-operation across European defence industries.
LEADER II*	Development of rural areas through innovative community enterprise.
PESCA*	Development of fishing industries.
Portuguese Textiles	Re-structuring of Portuguese textile industry.
RECHAR	Coal-mining programme.
REGIS	Aiding French, Portuguese and Spanish overseas dependent territories.
RESIDER	Steel industry programme.
RETEX	Re-structuring of textile industry throughout EU.
SMALL FIRMS/SMES*	Aiding the adjustment of SMEs to the Single Market.
Special Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties*	Tackling social exclusion and promoting reconciliation.
URBAN*	Addressing social problems in urban areas.

* Indicates those Initiatives currently operating in Ireland.

¹ Formerly known as HORIZON.

Appendix Four.

Donegal in Statistics.¹

Total Population: 129, 435.

Of which males: 65, 233

females: 64, 202.

Population of selected towns/villages:

Buncrana: 3, 310

Bundoran: 1, 704

Carndonagh: 1,834

Castelfinn: 1,228

Convoy: 1,967

Glencolumbkille: 766

Greencastle: 683

Kilmacrennan: 836

Letterkenny: 7, 254

Monorcunningham: 735

Milford: 1,334

Newtoncunnigham: 711

Raphoe: 1,435

Rathmelton: 1,702

St Johnston: 1,121

Stranolar: 3,737

Termon: 351

Labour Force: 47, 092

Of which at work: 35, 134

unemployed: 10, 293

unemployment rate: 25.4%

Breakdown of employment, by industrial category:

Manufacturing: 8,271

Agriculture: 6,236

Professional servies: 5,655

Commerce: 5,640

Persoanl servies and other: 2,586

Public administration: 2,322

Transport and communications: 1,422

Other industry: 2,982

¹ Data taken from CSO (1997) and Donegal County Enterprise Board (1995).

Population classified by religious persuasion, rural districts:

<u>Rural district</u>	<u>% Catholic</u>	<u>% Church of Ireland</u>	<u>%Other</u>	<u>% Not Stated</u>	<u>Total</u>
Ballyshannon:	89.5	6.2	1.6	2.7	100
Donegal:	82.4	11.1	4.2	2.3	100
Dunfanaghy:	91.2	4.9	0.9	3.0	100
Glenties:	95.1	2.1	0.7	2.1	100
Inishowen:	89.7	3.0	4.5	2.8	100
Letterkenny:	82.4	5.2	10.1	2.4	100
Milford:	84.3	5.6	7.9	2.1	100
Stranolar:	80.5	7.3	10.3	1.9	100
County Donegal:	87.1	5.2	5.3	2.4	100
Ireland:	93.1	2.8	1.0	3.2	100

Appendix Five.

A Summary of EU Programmes.

The structure of the various EU programmes operating in Donegal discussed in the test are summarised below.

1. The Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation 1994-9.

Nature of programme: Community Initiative.

Number of Sub-Programmes: 7

Number of Measures: 28 (19 measures operative in Republic of Ireland).

Sub-Programme.	Measures.
1. Employment.	1.1. Boosting Growth and Retraining for Peace. 1.2. Action for Jobs. 1.3. Improving the Accessibility and Quality of Training, Education and Employment Services. 1.4. Accompanying Infrastructure and Equipment Support.
2(A). Urban Regeneration (Northern Ireland).	2(A).1. Urban Regeneration for Peace and Reconciliation (Belfast and Derry). 2(A).2. Urban Regeneration for Peace and Reconciliation (Region-Wide).
2(B). Rural Regeneration (Northern Ireland).	2(B).1. Community based Actions. 2(B).2. Rural Economic Development. 2(B).3. Fisheries and Aquaculture and Water Based Tourism.
2(C). Urban and Rural Regeneration (Border Counties).	2(C).1a. Urban and Village Renewal and Tourism (ERDF). 2(C).1b. Village Renewal and Tourism (EAGGF). 2(C).2. Community-Led Development.
3. Cross Border.	3.1. Business and Cultural Links. 3.2. Infrastructure. 3.3. Co-operation Between Public Bodies. 3.4. Cross-Border Reconciliation.
4. Social Inclusion.	4.1. Developing Grass Roots Capacities and Promoting the Inclusion of Women. 4.2. Preventing Exclusion. 4.3. Promoting the Inclusion of Children and Young People. 4.4. Promoting the Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups and Improving the Accessibility and Quality of Services Aimed at these Groups. 4.5. Promoting Pathways to Reconciliation. 4.6. Accompanying Infrastructure and Equipment Support.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 5. Productive Investment/Industrial Development | 5.1 Investment Promotion.
5.2. New Industrial Development Services.
5.3. Trade Development. |
| 6. Partnerships | No sub-measures. |
| 7. Technical Assistance. | No sub-measures. |

Responsible Bodies: -Area Development Management Limited and the (in the R. of I.) Combat Poverty Agency (Measures 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2(C).2, 3.4, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6, 5.2 and 5.3).
-County Council-led Task Forces for Peace and Reconciliation (Measures 2(C).1a. and 2(C).1b).
-Co-operation North (Measure 3.1).

2. LEADER II.

Nature of Programme: Community Initiative.

Number of Sub-Programmes: 6

Responsible Bodies: Donegal Local Development Company.
Inishowen Rural Development Ltd.
MFG Teo.
Islands Leader Group.

3. Operational Programme for Urban, Local and Rural Development.

Nature of programme: Operational Programme number 15.

Number of Sub-Programmes: 3

Responsible Bodies: Donegal County Enterprise Board (Sub-programme 1).
(In Donegal) Donegal County Council (Sub-Programme 3)
Donegal Local Development Company (Sub-Programme 2).
Inishowen Partnership Company (Sub-Programme 2).
MFG Teo (Sub-Programme 2).

Appendix Six.

Donegal County Council, 1997.¹

<u>Councillor [EA]</u>	<u>Party</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>First elected / co-opted(c)</u>
Bennet, C.[G]	FG	Farmer	1997 (c)
Blaney, H. [M]	IFF	Farmer / publican	1958 (c)
Brennan, F.[G]	FF	Auctioneer	1991 (c)
Coll, F.[G]	IND	Builder	1991
Conaghan, H.[B]	FF	Politician	1964
Coughlan, M*.[D]	FF	Politician	1993 (c)
Devenny, J.[L]	DPP	Farmer / businessman	1991
Dooan, M*.[G]	FG	School principal	1992 (c)
Ferry, J.[B]	SF	Barman	1991 (c)
Gallagher, C.[D]	FG	Businessman	1957
Gill, S.[B]	FG	Wholesaler	1969
Harkin, D.[L]	IFF	Businessman	1974
Harte, P.[L]	FG	Politician	1960
Keaveney, C*.[B]	FF	Teacher	1994 (c)
Kelly, P.[G]	IFF	Teacher	1991 (c)
Kennedy, P.[D]	FF	Sales rep.	1969
Loughrey, J.[M]	FG	Estate agent	1974
Maloney, S.[L]	LAB	Nurse	1991
McBreathy, J.[D]	FF	Teacher	1974
McEniff, S.[D]	FF	Hotel owner	1961
McGinley, N.[M]	FG	Car dealer	1964
McGlinchey, B.[L]	FF	Night-club owner	1957
McGonagle, D.[B]	FF	Businessman	1961
McGowan, P.[L]	FF	Farmer and politician	1957
McGuinness, B.[B]	FG	Farmer	1979
O'Donnell, A.*[M]	IFF	Businesswoman	1993 (c)
O'Kelly, F.[D]	FF	Veterinary surgeon	1979
Reid, J.J.[L]	FG	Farmer and car dealer	1964
Rodgers, S.[G]	DEML	Politician	1969

[Key: EA: Electoral Area. (M: Milford; L: Letterkenny; G: Glenties; B: Buncrana; D: Donegal) FF: Fianna Fáil; FG: Fine Gael; IFF: Independent Fianna Fáil; LAB: Labour; SF: Sinn Féin; DEML: Democratic Left; DPP: Donegal Progressive Party¹; IND: Independent;

* Indicates the four female members of the council, all of whom gained their seats through co-option following the deaths of their fathers or husbands, who were also MCCs.

¹The Donegal Progressive Party is an independent organisation led by Cllr Devenny.]

¹Data compiled from Sacks (1976); Irish Times 21st. June 1974; Irish Times 24th. June 1985; Brennan, S and Murphy, E. (1986). *Brennan's Key to Local Authorities*. Dublin: Landscape Press; author's research.

Appendix Seven.

Grants Distributed By EU-Funded Development Agencies in County Donegal.

I. List of Grants Distributed by the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (ADM/CPA-Administered Measures) 1995-1997.

Project Name	Award	Brief Description. ¹
Ballybofey: Balor Centre.	£5,835	To research the development of a community arts project.
Ballybofey: Ballybofey and Stranolar Women's Group.	£3,000	To provide training for the steering group.
Ballybofey: Glen Development	£3,000	To draw up a tourism plan for Lough Trusk.
Ballydevitt: Donegal Education Centre.	£3,000	Feasibility study for the development of IT centre and community education courses.
Ballyshannon: Erne Enterprise Unemployment Group.	£3000	Unemployment needs survey.
Buncrana: Inishowen Community Enterprise.	£2,100	Feasibility study for the establishment of a newspaper for Inishowen.
Buncrana: Inishowen Partnership Company.	£38,360	To employ a youth development worker.
Buncrana: Linsfort House.	£3,000	To conduct feasibility study of running personal development courses for young children.
Bundoran: Bundoran Resource Centre.	£3,000	To formulate an action plan for community development.

¹ Descriptions are those provided in the press, and to the author by the agencies themselves.

Carndonagh: Beyond Borders.	£117,300	To provide cross-border arts training and workshops.
Carndonagh: Carndonagh Playground Development Group.	£3,000	To prepare a feasibility study on the provision of play area in the town and a survey on recreational needs for young and old and the physically challenged.
Carndonagh: IRDL.	£7,000	To prepare a programme for a simulated enterprise project for early school leavers.
Carndonagh: IRDL.	£30,000	To provide a diploma course in community development practice in association with UCG.
Carndonagh: Inishowen Tourism Co-operative.	£100,000	To employ a worker to advance the Inishowen Tourism Project and the role of the co-op as a self-sustaining organisation.
Carndonagh: Read to Succeed.	£1,200	To develop linkages with a partner organisation in the Shankhill area of Belfast.
Churchill: Derryveagh Glens Rural Community Association.	£3,000	To fund a session worker to facilitate the production of an integrated plan, identifying priorities and networking with other groups.
Convoy: Broadroad Association	£3,000	To plan and develop a cross-community tourism project, potentially linking communities on both sides of the border.

Convoy: Convoy Community Association.	£1,200	To organise a series of events for the elderly.
Convoy: Convoy Enterprise Centre.	£3,000	To enable the management group to outreach into the local community and respond to cross-community challenges in the area.
Convoy: Convoy Enterprise Centre.	£32,000	To employ a community enterprise officer.
Donegal Town: Area Women's Group.	£3,000	To prepare a strategic plan.
Donegal Town: Down and Donegal Partnership.	£1,000	To establish the partnership as a legal entity.
Donegal Town: Donegal Adult Literacy Association.	£3,500	Development of a course and training for tutors.
Donegal Town: Donegal Area Development Association.	£3,000	To produce a strategic plan for the area, focusing on community services, arts and culture, enterprise and sports and recreation.
Donegal Town: La Leche League.	£3,500	To produce booklets for disadvantaged women and for hospital maternity units.
Donegal Town: North West Early Childhood.	£13,590	To assess the training needs of early childhood workers.
Downings: An Teach Ban.	£11,800	To run a series of classes for community groups.

Drumkeen: Drumkeen Development Association.	£3,000	To survey the needs of women, children, the unemployed and other excluded groups.
Dunfanaghy: Dunfanaghy Community Resource.	£3,000	To undertake a training needs analysis.
Fintown: R and R Associates.	£3,000	To undertake a feasibility study examining the idea of a support service for ex-prisoners.
Killygordon: Meenreagh and District Development Association.	£3,000	To survey the social needs of the community and draw up a strategic development plan.
Killygordon: Crossroads and Killygordon Group.	£1,200	To carry out a feasibility for the development of a tourist trail with a group in Castlederg, Co. Tyrone.
Letterkenny: Community Worker's Co-operative.	£3,000	To set up a management team and develop an action plan.
Letterkenny: Community Worker's Co-operative.	£96,140	To employ a project development worker and administrator.
Letterkenny: Donegal Local Development Company.	£60,000	To employ a women's networker.
Letterkenny: Donegal Local Development Company.	£33,219	To fund a training course for facilitators and conduct an evaluation of the community response strategy.
Letterkenny: Donegal Local Development Company.	£111,055	To employ two community link workers.

Letterkenny: Donegal Local Development Company.	£8,390	To buy office equipment for community link workers.
Letterkenny: Donegal Women's Refuge Group.	£74,051	To employ an outreach worker.
Letterkenny: Glenboe Community Action Ltd.	£20,259	To undertake a Training and Transformation Programme designed to empower people who have been marginalised.
Letterkenny: Knocknashinna Residents' Association.	£90,000	To employ a community worker.
Letterkenny: Letterkenny Community Centre	£1,016	To develop a cross-border project in conjunction with a group from Co.Derry.
Letterkenny: Letterkenny Community Centre.	£15,000	To draw up a development plan.
Letterkenny: North West Women's Consortium.	£22,760	To develop a cross-programme for women in violent relationships.
Letterkenny: Letterkenny Women's Centre.	£60,523	To deliver a counselling course.
Letterkenny: Letterkenny Women's Centre.	£89,150	To employ a co-ordinator and facilitator for the centre.
Letterkenny: Letterkenny Women's Centre.	£12,000	To renovate the centre buy a computer.
Letterkenny: Macra na Feirma.	£87,500	To fund the development of the organisation in Donegal.

Lifford: Lifford/Clonleigh Resource Centre.	£19,370	To organise a "second chance" training programme in IT for young, marginalised unemployed people from Lifford and Strabane.
Lifford: Lifford/Clonleigh Resource Centre.	£130,000	To employ a youth team leader.
Milford: Milford Community Playgroup.	£500	To develop a reconciliation project in Milford.
Milford: Integrated Resource Development.	£3,000	To fund the formulation of a strategic development plan for Milford.
Newtoncunningham: Demos Theatre Group.	£1,378	To fund a drama programme for schools.
Raphoe: Raphoe Boxing Club.	£5,000	To undertake a survey of needs of young people in the area.
Raphoe: Raphoe Communities in Action.	£10,000	To assist the member groups of Raphoe Communities in Action to draw up their programme of activities.
Raphoe: Raphoe Youth Project.	£3,000	To investigate the needs of the community.
Ramelton: Ramelton Action Group.	£3,000	To formulate a development plan for Ramelton and its hinterland.

Ramelton: Ramelton Town Hall Development Association.	£3,000	To conduct a survey amongst users and potential users of the community hall, to ascertain their requirements and to employ an architect/surveyor to prepare plans and costings for the refurbishment of the facility.
Rossbeg: Donegal Workshop Drama Group.	£200	To fund meetings with a theatre group in Derry on the theme of reconciliation.
Rosstown: Swilly-Mulroy Community Development.	£3,000	To undertake a house-to-house survey of the area, determining community needs.
Rosstown: Centre for Peace and Reconciliation.	£25,000	To employ a worker and counsellor.
St. Johnston: Community Development Association.	£3,000	To assess the future needs of the community.

II. List of Grants Distributed by Donegal Local Development Company Under the LEADER II Programme 1995-1997.

Castlefresh Ltd.	£20,000	Packaging of vegetables.
Convoy Enterprise Group.	£3,200	Feasibility study of Convoy Dam.
Conwal and Leck Cemeteries.	£3,825	Landscaping Conwal Cemetery.
Craig Boatbuilders.	£2,423	Cutting and welding equipment.
Creevy Pier.	£15,000	Self-catering accommodation.
Derryveagh Glens Area Association.	£2,211	Production of brochures.

Donegal Chamber of Commerce.	£5,000	Feasibility study for river bank walk.
Donegal/Derry Seed Potatoes.	£5,000	Feasibility study for potato export.
Donegal Handweavers.	£30,000	Promotion of handweaving skills.
Donegal Local Development Company.	£1,739	Training courses.
Donegal Railway Restoration.	£5,000	Conservation of railway houses.
Donegal Sock Company.	£20,000	Machinery to manufacture socks.
Donegal Vermin Control.	£5,000	Employment grant.
Fernhill Language School.	£12,000	Setting up language school.
Glen Development.	£5,000	Trusk lake improvement.
Joint Marketing Group.	£4,000	Promotion of tourist attractions.
Laghey Waste.	£1,115	Recycling equipment.
Letterkenny and District Angling Association.	£5,000	Development Plan.
Letterkenny Tennis Centre.	£5,523	Floodlighting.
McGarrigle Framing.	£4,519	Frame manufacture.
P. McGuire Ltd.	£2,989	Office equipment.
Old Letterkenny Reunion.	£2,000	Tourist Activities.
Seam McCormack Ltd.	£3,000	Promotion of golf classic.
Integrated Resource Development Milford.	£1,200	Diploma in rural development.
The Workhouse.	£4,206	Computer and lighting equipment.
Private promoter.	£5,000	Bed and Breakfast.

Private promoter.	£4,054	Bed and Breakfast.
Private promoter.	£5,000	Bed and Breakfast.
Private promoter.	£2,358	Bed and Breakfast.
Private promoter.	£6,894	Bed and Breakfast.
Private promoter.	£1,200	Diploma in rural development.
Private promoter.	£5,000	Feasibility study for drainage company.
Private promoter.	£1,334	Feasibility study for herbs.
Private promoter.	£20,000	Music and craft school.
Private promoter.	£800	Self-catering accommodation.
Private promoter.	£2,480	Self-catering accommodation.
Private promoter.	£4,246	Self-catering accommodation.
Private promoter.	£5,062	Self-catering accommodation.
Private promoter.	£2,200	Training course.
Private promoter.	£1,120	Training course.

III. List of Grants Distributed by Donegal Task for Peace and Reconciliation Under Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (Sub-Programme 2(C) 1a. and 1b.) 1996-1997.

Town/village cluster	Grant allocated
Kerrykeel Downings Carrigart	£90,000
Killygordon Crossroads Ballindrait Drumkeen	£115,000

Killea	
Muff	
Bridgend	
Fahan	
Burnfoot	
Redcastle	
Quigley's Point	£155,000
Clonmany	
Ballyliffin	
Malin	
Culdaff	
Gleneely	
Carrowmenagh	£155,000
Loughanure	
Crollly	
Meenaleck	
Dore	
Brinaleck	
Annagry	
Ranafast	
Kinclasslagh	
Mullaghduff	£220,000
Tory	
Arranmore	
Narin/Portnoo	
Maghery	
Lettermacaward	£130,000
Frosses	
Bruckless	
Meenaneary	£45,000
Milford	
Glenties	
Ballybofey Relief Road	£1,535,000
Letterkenny Urban District Council: Donegal Peace Park.	£225,000
Community Project: Coiste Pobal Beale an Atha Mhoir: All Weather Sports Field.	£10,000

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